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L I F E

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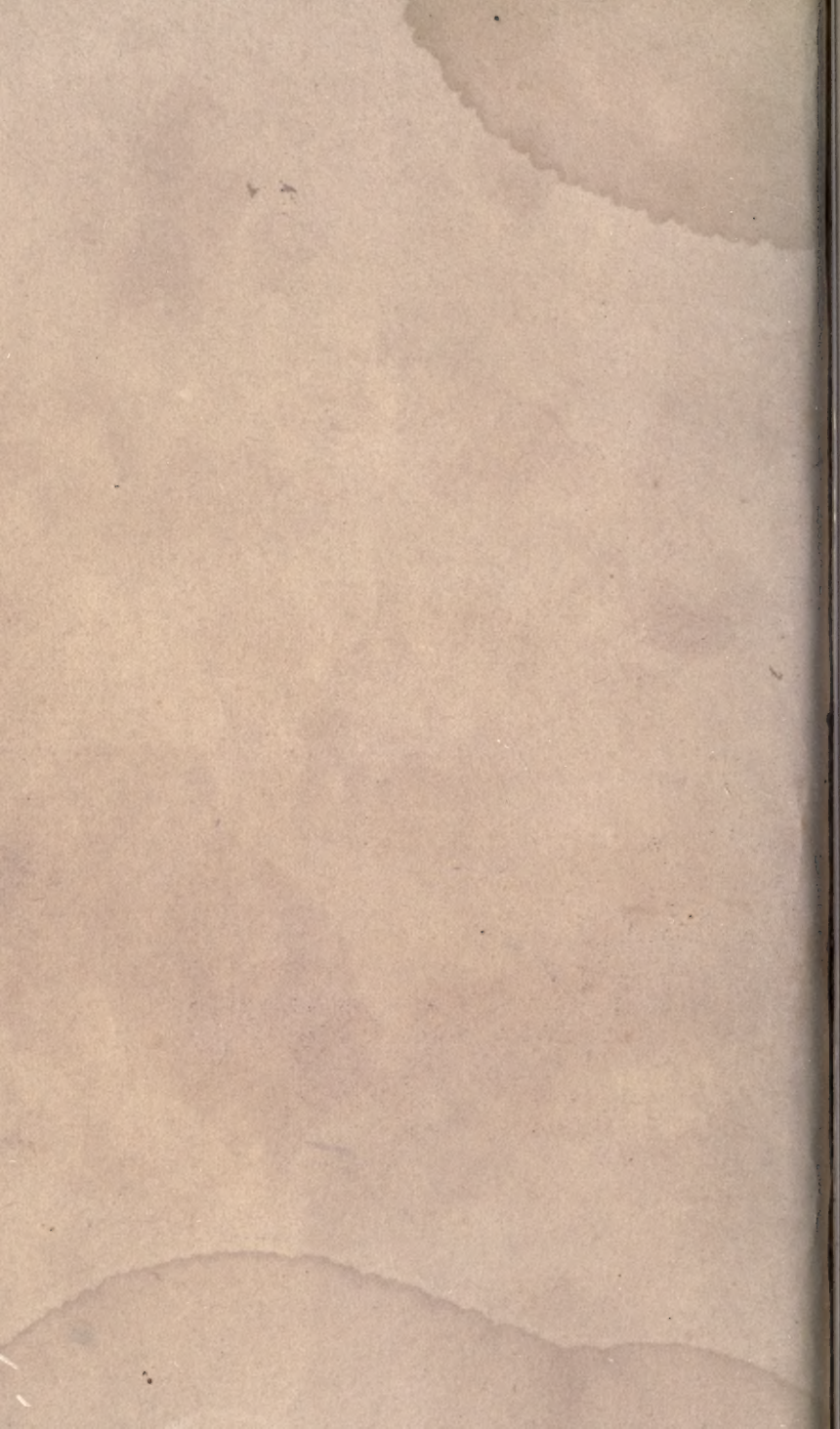
L I F E
OF
H I S G R A C E
THE
D U K E O F W E L L I N G T O N ,
K. G. &c. &c.

BY
W. H. Maxwell.
Prebendary of Balla.



Walmer Castle.

London.
ALFRED H. BAILY & CO. 63, CORNHILL.
1840.



LIFE

OF

FIELD-MARSHAL HIS GRACE

THE

DUKE OF WELLINGTON,

K.G. G.C.B. G.C.H. &c. &c.

BY

W. H. MAXWELL,

AUTHOR OF STORIES OF WATERLOO, THE BIVOUAC,

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

A. H. BAILY & CO. 83, CORNHILL.

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This Volume contains, in addition to the foregoing List of Embellishments, many
 beautifully executed Wood Engravings.

LIFE OF ARTHUR DUKE OF WELLINGTON,

ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER I.

SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY'S PLAN OF OPERATIONS—STRENGTH AND DISPOSITION OF HIS ARMY—SOULT'S POSITION—AFFAIR OF THE TAMAGA—COLONEL PATRICK—STORM OF THE BRIDGE OF AMARANTE—PREPARATIONS FOR AN ADVANCE—DISAFFECTION IN SOULT'S ARMY—DESPATCH TO LORD CASTLEREAGH—D'ARGENTON ARRESTED—SIR ARTHUR ADVANCES—AFFAIRS OF ALBERGARIA NOVA, GRIJON, AND CARVALHOS — FRENCH CROSS THE DOURO—DESTROY THE BRIDGE, AND ESCAPE TO OPORTO.

HAVING ascertained that the armies of Soult and Victor were too widely separated to permit of any unity of operations between these marshals, Sir Arthur Wellesley decided on attacking the Duke of Dalmatia without delay, and, if successful in the north, to return rapidly to the Tagus, and in conjunction with Cuesta's corps, fall subsequently upon Victor. Although the latter was distant fully eighteen marches from Lisbon, and it was possible that Oporto might be recovered, even before the first movements of Sir Arthur should be known at the head quarters of the

Duke of Belluno, the English general left nothing to chance, but adopted precautionary measures to protect the country, and secure the quiet of the capital. A Portuguese corps, amounting to seven thousand men, assisted by four British regiments, was left, under the command of Major-General Mackenzie, to defend the right bank of the Tagus; Colonel Mayne, with some militia and part of the Lusitanian legion, was posted at Alcantara, to hold the bridge, or if deforced, to blow up an arch, and thus render it impassable; while at Abrantez and Villa Velha the flying bridges were removed—and thus Lisbon was secured during the absence of the British army in the north, from any effort that Victor might make to reach it.

Sir Arthur Wellesley transferred his head quarters on the 1st of May to Pombal, and on the 2d to Coimbra, where the concentration of the army was effected on the 5th. At both these places the British general was enthusiastically welcomed. The streets were brilliantly illuminated, bonfires blazed on the heights, and the deafening *vivas* of the populace, told how much in unison with the feelings of the nation had been the appointment of the new commander.

Independent of a separate corps under the orders of Marshal Beresford, the army, as now organized, comprised four divisions, of which one was cavalry, under Lieutenant-General Payne. The first division had two brigades of infantry, and twelve pieces of cannon. The second, three brigades of infantry, and six guns. The third, two brigades of infantry, and six pieces of artillery. Lieutenant-General Paget commanded the first corps; Sherbrooke, the second; and Hill, the third. The strength of the whole of these *corps d'armée* was fourteen thousand six hundred infantry, about fifteen hundred cavalry, and twenty-four pieces of cannon. The auxiliary corps, under Trant, was at Vouga; Silveira's, on the Tamaga; and Wilson, with a Portuguese detachment, at Viseu, threatened Franceschi's left flank, and kept open a communication, by Lamego, with Silveira.

The position in which the Duke of Dalmatia was placed had now become most critical. Chaves had been retaken by Silveira—and as that general had been strongly reinforced by his junction with Boteilho from the Lima, to open his communications with Tras os Montes and Galicia, Soult determined to attack Amarante and secure the bridge. Loison and Laborde were accordingly despatched to march direct upon the town, while La Houssaye moved upon the same point by Guimaraens.

Silveira retreated immediately; but on the 18th he was overtaken by Laborde, attacked, defeated, and driven in such disorder over the Tamaga, that, without attempting a defence, he abandoned both bridge and town. The gallantry of a British officer in the Portuguese service retrieved the fatal error committed by his superior. Colonel Patrick rallied his regiment, seized the approaches to the bridge, and defended them most obstinately, until Silveira, recovering from his panic, returned to his assistance, and occupied the heights above Villa Real with a corps of six thousand men.*

On the next day, reinforced by La Houssaye's brigade, the attack was fiercely renewed by the French generals, and the bridge as obstinately defended by Colonel Patrick. Unfortunately, that gallant officer received a mortal wound, and with him the spirit of the defenders appeared to have expired. The Portuguese resistance gradually became feeble, and in the evening they yielded ground, and crossed the Tamaga. But still the passage of the river was sealed against the French generals. The Tamaga was flooded; all means of pontage, save the bridge of Amarante, were destroyed—and that was defended by a triple row of palisades, commanded by a ten-gun battery—mined, loaded, and prepared for an explosion, at any moment the Portuguese might deem it advisable.

* "Thanks to the heroic courage of Colonel Patrick, Silveira's reputation as a general was established among his countrymen, by the very action which should have ruined him in their estimation."—*Napier*.

The first barricade was reached on the 20th, by means of the flying sap; but the heavy fire maintained by the troops of Silveira obliged the attack to be abandoned. An attempt to throw a bridge across the river, below the town, failed; and the efforts of Laborde were completely arrested by obstacles which seemed too great to be surmounted.

At this crisis, Brochard, an engineer officer, devised a plan, as remarkable for its ingenuity, as it was perfect in success. His project was to blow down the centre barricade, destroy the cord which communicated with the Portuguese mine, and, in the confusion which the explosion would be certain to produce, carry the bridge by assault. To place the powder close beneath the pallisades, without its being discovered, was both a doubtful and a dangerous attempt: but to the brave nothing is impossible.

“ The troops were quietly got under arms, and placed as near the head of the bridge as their being concealed from the Portuguese guard would permit; while, to call off the attention of the latter, some twenty men were stationed to keep up a fire upon the intrenchments, so directed as not to endanger the sappers, who had volunteered for the real service of the hour. It was a service so hopeful and hazardous as to excite the liveliest solicitude for its success. The barrel of powder was covered with a gray cloak, that it might neither be heard nor seen, and the man who undertook to deposit it in its place wore a cloak of the same colour. The clear moonlight was favourable to the adventure, by the blackness of the shadow which the parapet on one side produced. In that line of darkness the sapper crept along at full-length, pushing the barrel before him with his head, and guiding it with his hands. His instructions were, to stop if he heard the slightest movement on the Portuguese side: and a string was fastened to one of his feet, by which the French were enabled to know how far he had advanced, and to communicate with him. Having placed the barrel, and uncovered that part where it was to be kindled, he returned with the same caution.

Four barrels, one after the other, were thus arranged without alarming the Portuguese. The fourth adventurer had not the same command of himself as his predecessors had evinced. Possessed either with fear, or premature exultation, as soon as he had deposited the barrel in its place, instead of making his way back slowly and silently along the line of shadow, he rose and ran along the middle of the bridge in the moonlight. He was seen, fired at, and shot in the thigh. But the Portuguese did not take the alarm as they ought to have done; they kept up a fire upon the entrance of the bridge, and made no attempt to discover for what purpose their intrenchments had been approached so closely.

“Four hours had elapsed before the four barrels were placed: by that time it was midnight, and in another hour, when the Portuguese had ceased their fire, a fifth volunteer proceeded in the same manner with a saucisson* fastened to his body; this he fixed in its place, and returned safely. By two o’clock this part of the business was completed, and Laborde was informed that all was ready. Between three and four a fog arose from the river and filled the valley, so that the houses on the opposite shore could scarcely be discerned through it. This was favourable for the assailants. The saucisson was fired; and the explosion, as Brochard had expected, threw down the intrenchments, and destroyed the apparatus for communicating with the mine.”† Instantly the sappers rushed forward, followed by a column of grenadiers, who had been held in readiness for the attempt. Before the smoke rolled away, the bridge was won. The grenadiers being promptly supported, the suburb, with the camp and battery, were carried in rapid succession, and the Portuguese completely routed, and driven to the mountains in great disorder, while the loss to the victors was inconsiderable.‡

* A *saucisson* is a hose filled with gunpowder, which reaches from the chamber of the mine to the gallery.

† Southey.

‡ The plan for forcing the bridge of Amarante, was, from its novelty and

Laborde returned with part of his brigade to Oporto, leaving Loison to hold Amarante—the intermediate communications between both places being effectually secured by one battalion of infantry, and two regiments of dragoons.

While this bold and successful operation was being effected, Sir Arthur Wellesley had made all preliminary arrangements for his movement against Soult. The greatest difficulty he had to overcome, was to ensure a supply of stores and provisions before the army should advance. The means of land carriage were not to be obtained; large vessels were not adapted for coasting the Portuguese shores; and although there was no scarcity of provisions, as the magazines at Caldas were sufficient to afford a supply, it was hazardous to forward them to those points where they were most likely to be required. But this serious difficulty was surmounted by the English general. Country boats were obtained, and the owners, induced by a liberal remuneration, succeeded in carrying the stores safely to Peniche, and into the Mondego.

The general plan of operations upon which Sir Arthur Wellesley had decided, turned upon the isolated situation in which his opponent was placed. By able combinations he hoped to cut him off from Spain, and thus oblige him to fight at great disadvantage, or save his army by a surrender. In accordance with this plan, Beresford was to unite with Wilson's corps detached at Viseu, cross the Douro at Lamego, and join Silveira at Amarante. This being effected, the main body of the British army was to advance directly on Oporto—Beresford, in the mean time, having descended the Douro, seized all the boats, and secured a means of passage for Sir Arthur. All being in readiness to advance, the unexpected intelligence of Silveira's defeat,

boldness, rejected by the French generals to whom it was proposed. It was, however, transmitted to Oporto, and "Soult sent General Hulot, his first aide-de-camp, to report if the project was feasible. Hulot approved of Brochard's proposal, and the latter commenced his operations on the 2d of May."—*Napier.*

and the loss of Amarante, caused some alteration, but no delay, in the operations of the English general.

Soult at this time remained in ignorance, that he, whom he should have dreaded most, was in force on the Mondego; and, stranger still, in direct communication with several of his own officers, whose designs against himself were of the most treacherous description. A dangerous society had spread themselves extensively through the French ranks; their disaffection to the government of Napoleon was deeply rooted; and the Philadelphes, as they termed themselves, had determined to re-establish a democracy once more, and overturn that dynasty which had been built upon the ruins of a republic. Immediately upon his arrival, an accredited agent* was despatched by the conspirators to the English general; and, with his accustomed prudence, the overtures he had received were transmitted by the latter to Lord Castlereagh, in a secret despatch. The nature and extent of the conspiracy were thus detailed in Sir Arthur's letter, dated from Lisbon on the 27th of April.

“ Upon the arrival of General Beresford at Lisbon on the 25th instant, he informed me that he had had some communication with a French officer, through the means of M.—, at Oporto, which announced a disposition in the officers of Soult's corps to revolt, and to seize Soult and other principal officers of the army.†

“ On the night before last, a French officer by the name of —, arrived here, accompanied by Major Douglas, who had been sent by General Beresford to the French

* D'Argenton, an adjutant-major, was the chief organ of the conspiracy, but it was ascertained that many superior officers were actively engaged in the plot. Two colonels, Donadieu and Lafitte, were principals; and the latter, it was stated, had a personal interview, between the French and English out-posts, with Sir Arthur Wellesley.

† The parties alluded to in the despatch, were D'Argenton, a French staff-officer, and John Viana, a merchant of Oporto. With great moderation, Soult, instead of shooting the traitor on the spot, merely confined him; and D'Argenton, profiting by the hurried operations which ensued, managed to escape for a time, the fate he had so richly merited.

advanced posts to confer with him ; and I had yesterday an interview with this officer.

“ He informed me that great discontent and dissatisfaction with the measures of Buonaparte prevailed throughout the French army, and particularly in the corps of Marshal Soult, which had suffered, and was still suffering, extreme distress ; that dissatisfaction had long prevailed on various accounts, particularly the conscription, but had been greatly increased by a sense of the injustice of the measures adopted in respect to Spain, and the seizure of the king ; and that a large proportion of the officers of the army of Soult were determined to revolt, and to seize the general and other principal officers of the army, supposed to be particularly attached to the interests of Buonaparte, if that army should be pressed by the troops under my command, so as to oblige Soult to concentrate in situations chosen with a view to their defence rather than with a view to their subsistence.

“ ——— having met Major Douglas between the advanced posts of the two armies, and his communications having there appeared to the major to be so important that he thought it desirable that ——— should see General Beresford, he proposed that ——— should come to Lisbon. I draw your Lordship’s attention to this fact, as it removes a suspicion which might otherwise attach to the whole subject.

“ The objects of these communications appear to be—first, to prevail upon us to press upon Soult’s corps ; and, secondly, to give to ——— and two other captains of the French army passports to go to France.

“ In respect to the first of these objects, your Lordship is aware that I had adopted a plan of operations which would have effected it ; and I must add, that, in the different conversations with Major Douglas, General Beresford, and me, ———, in pressing that plan upon us, advised us to watch the movements of the enemy on the left of the Tagus, while we should be engaged in operations to the

northward. He was, at the same time, entirely ignorant of the situation of Victor, and of all the other French corps in Spain, excepting that of Ney.

“In respect to the second object, I asked ——— particularly the reasons he had for wishing to go to France at all, and those he had for wishing to go before any blow should be struck. His answer was, that he wished to go in order to communicate to Generals ———, ———, ———, and others dissatisfied with the existing order of things, the measures which the officers of Soult’s army had in contemplation, and which would certainly be adopted if the army should be at all pressed by us; and that he wished to go at an early period, because it was certain that, as soon as Buonaparte should receive intelligence of the event, he would seize all suspected of being adverse to him, and would put an end to the hopes which were entertained that the same measures would become general throughout the French army.

“In the existing situation of affairs in Portugal, I have considered it proper to refuse to attend to these communications. I have therefore asked the admiral to give to ——— passports for himself, and to two other captains of the French army, to go to France by sea; in which ——— says they will experience no difficulty, as Soult allows vessels of all nations to quit Oporto; and the commanding-officers of the regiments to which they belong being parties to the plan of revolt, are desirous, and have the power to permit them to go.

“I have pledged myself no further; and I have particularly desired General Beresford, in delivering his passports to ———, to request that he will inform his friends in the French army, that he asked from me, and only obtained, passports to go to France; that I wish them success in the accomplishment of their objects; but that the line which I shall take upon them must depend upon the circumstances in which the French army shall stand at the moment the officers shall seize their general.

“I acknowledge that I do not entertain any hopes that I shall be enabled to effect more to the northward than to

oblige Soult to retreat from Portugal. If circumstances should enable me to do more, the question whether the operations against the French army ought to be carried to extremities, or whether they should be allowed to seize their general and place themselves under our protection, becomes one of greater difficulty; upon which I am desirous, if possible, of having the opinion of his Majesty's government.

"Your Lordship will observe, that I have not thought it proper to discourage the disposition which appears to prevail among the French officers; at the same time that I have taken care not only not to pledge myself to any particular line of conduct, but that those concerned should understand that I do not consider myself pledged by any thing that has passed.

"The successful revolt of a French army might be attended by the most extensive and important consequences; whereas their defeat, or what is a more improbable event, their surrender, would affect only local interests and objects, excepting that either of these events would add to the reputation of his Majesty's arms.

"In the consideration and decision of this question, much must depend upon the minute circumstances attending the situation in which each of the armies shall be placed at the moment; but I consider it my duty to give the earliest intelligence to his Majesty's ministers, in order, if possible, that I may have the advantage of their opinion, and his Majesty's commands, before I shall have to decide upon the line which I shall adopt."

The caution observed by Sir Arthur Wellesley in the conduct of the secret correspondence that ensued, while it encouraged the spirit of revolt, in no wise comprised his own security, nor allowed D'Argenton either to penetrate his plans, or obtain information touching the strength or distribution of the allied forces.* Treachery seldom

* When D'Argenton's treason was discovered by General Lefebre, Soult, anxious to learn the extent of the conspiracy, offered pardon to the offender, if he denounced his associates, and disclosed all that he knew respecting the

succeeds; and the plot was too extensively known to be long concealed. "On the 9th of May,* D'Argenton was arrested; the film fell from Soult's eyes, and all the perils of his position broke at once upon his view. Treason in his camp, which he could not probe; a powerful enemy close in his front; the insurgents again active in his rear, and the French troops scattered from the Vouga to the Tamaga, and from the Douro to the Lima, and commanded by officers, whose fidelity was necessarily suspected, while the extent of the conspiracy was unknown."

In this disheartening position, Soult's firmness and talents were admirably displayed. Loison was ordered to hold Amarante at all risks; and Lorge, with the garrison of Viana, was sent to his assistance. Preparatory to his intended movement through the Tras os Montes, whatever artillery could be removed from Oporto, was forwarded towards the Tamaga, and all the surplus powder and stores were wasted and destroyed.

While the French brigades were unavoidably extended between the Vouga and Tamaga, and the wings severed by the Douro, the British army was in hand at Coimbra, and ready to operate by Viseu and Lamego against either the left of the enemy, which in four or five marches might be turned; or against the right, which in two marches could be assailed with overwhelming numbers. Wellesley determined to avail himself of both routes,—preferring for his principal attack the right of the French army, as its

strength and position of the allies. To the first proposition, D'Argenton returned a steadfast refusal, and to the second, he as readily agreed. But Wellesley knew well that traitors are never to be trusted; and hence he returned from his missions a more degraded, but never "a wiser man," than when he entered the quarters of the English general. His end was precisely what was deserved: "he was sent to England, and there, with commendable humanity, provided for by the government; but soon venturing over to France, for the purpose of bringing back his wife and children, he was apprehended and shot,"—so says Dr. Southey. The fact is different,—D'Argenton was a regular spy—was arrested in his work of treason—and received the doom he merited.

* Napier.

position was exposed, and it was more immediately within his reach. Accordingly, Beresford marched on the 6th upon Lamego, by Viseu. On the 7th, Paget's division, with the light cavalry, took the Oporto road, halting, however, on the 8th to allow the marshal to gain the upper Douro. On the 9th, the march was continued for the Vouga, whither also Hill's division was moving by the Aveiro road; and there, the troops having arrived after night-fall, halted.

On reaching Aveiro, General Hill seized the boats, and embarked one brigade on the lake of Ovar, by which he was directed to turn the French right. The Portuguese fishermen rendered him a willing assistance. The second brigade embarked on the return of the boats; and at dawn of day of the 10th, the whole division was safe across the lake, and landed, without a casualty, upon the opposite shore.

While by these operations, Soult's flanks were being turned, Sir Arthur Wellesley, with the main body, moved forward to surprise and cut off Franceschi, who was in force at Albergaria Nova. The attempt was admirably arranged—but those unforeseen circumstances, through which the ablest dispositions fail so frequently, preserved the French general from ruin; and “an hour's delay, produced by a few trifling accidents, marred a combination that would have shorn Soult of a third of his infantry, and all his light cavalry.”* The march of Paget's column had been interrupted by some broken carriages, which, for a time, choked the road,—while Cotton was misled by his guide, and brought direct upon the front, and not upon the flank of the enemy. Instead of finding Franceschi unprepared, and attacking him in the haze of morning, he was discovered in order of battle, with his cavalry in line, and their flank resting on a wood occupied by a strong body of sharp-shooters. Cotton hesitated to assail a force so formidably posted,—and he halted until the infantry should come up.

* Napier.

Sir Arthur Wellesley arrived on the ground in person, while Franceschi boldly held his position, skirmishing with Trant's light troops which had come up. Paget's infantry being now in hand, not a moment was lost in attacking the sharp-shooters and clearing the wood. The French general retreated towards Oliveira, hard pressed, but still unbroken; and, marching all night, by a powerful exertion on the part of his soldiers, he reached Grijon in the morning, and united his troops with Mermet's brigade.

That night, the light-cavalry and Paget's division halted at Oliveira; and the guards, who had crossed the Vouga in the evening, occupied Albergaria. Anxious to overtake an enemy whom accidents had saved, Wellesley recommenced the pursuit at sun-rise; and at eight o'clock, by vigorous marching, he came up with them at Grijon.

"The position occupied by the French generals was strong in its right and centre; the one resting on a wood filled with tirailleurs; the other covered in front by villages and inclosures. But the left was the weak point,—and the eagle-eye of the British general, at a glance, perceived that it could be turned. Without once halting his column, he ordered General Murray, from the rear of the advanced guard, to move round by the right, throwing, at the same time, the 16th Portuguese into a pine-wood on the left. The latter were intended rather to distract the enemy's attention than themselves to attempt any thing serious; whilst General Paget, supported by two battalions in reserve, manœuvred upon their front. A very heavy firing immediately began; but the enemy no sooner observed the judicious movement round their left, than they abandoned their strong ground, and fled. Upon this, our troops were again thrown into column, and the march resumed as if nothing had happened; every movement being made with the same coolness, and in as perfect order, as if at a field-day."*

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

The British immediately occupied the heights from which they had dislodged the enemy, while the French generals continued their retreat. Perceiving that the rear was in confusion, the light cavalry under General Stewart, charged along the road in sections, with great gallantry and some success. Many of the French were sabred, and upwards of one hundred made prisoners. Alarmed at the intrepidity of the English hussars, the French, to check pursuit, halted and formed on some heights which completely commanded the road, and the cavalry were obliged to fall back; but, wheeling to the right, they made a threatening movement upon the left flank of the enemy. This danger the French generals avoided by resuming their retreat; and they accordingly abandoned the heights of Carvalhos. The remainder of the day was consumed in marching and fighting; for even when the advanced guard was warmly engaged, the column moved steadily forward, as if no enemy was in its front. With evening the pursuit ended—the advance bivouacking where it stood—Sir Arthur Wellesley taking up his quarters in the convent of Grijon;* and the guards resting in the surrounding hamlets, and upon the heights of Carvalhos.

The French brigades were anxiously urged forward,—no rest could be allowed—and, severe as the exertions of the day had been, hours were robbed from the night,—the Douro was passed—and its floating bridge destroyed before sun-rise. In effecting this, fortune favoured the retreating enemy. Hill's corps, which had been ordered to march by the coast road, had been misdirected, taken a wrong route, and lost too much time to reach the point where, had it been able to arrive, the French retreat might have been interrupted and the bridge preserved.

In war, a prudent foresight may plan well; but chance

* That day will be long remembered by the community of the convent. In the same apartment in which Sir Arthur and his staff supped, four French generals had breakfasted; a very few hours thus producing a singular succession of visitors, and some of them any thing but welcome guests.

will "make or mar" the ablest dispositions. All proved that Wellesley's arrangements were correct, but fortune declared against him. When she did, her favours were not blindly given,—they were bestowed upon an enemy whose gallantry deserved her smiles,—and who, when almost within the eagle grasp of their formidable assailant, by a brave and soldierly resistance, managed to effect their deliverance.



CHAPTER II.

SOULT REMAINS AT OPORTO—SECURES THE RIGHT BANK OF THE RIVER—WELLESLEY ARRIVES AT VILLA NOVA—PASSES THE DOURO, AND DEFEATS THE FRENCH—DESPATCH TO LORD CASTLEREAGH—DUKE OF DALMATIA RETREATS—LOISON FALLS BACK FROM AMARANTE—ITS LOSS NEARLY FATAL TO THE FRENCH ARMY—SOULT ABANDONS HIS ARTILLERY AND BAGGAGE—SEIZES THE BRIDGES OF THE CAVADO, AND THE SALTADOR, AND EFFECTS HIS ESCAPE INTO GALLICIA.

THE bold operations by which the French corps detached at Albergaria Nova and Grijon had been hurried across the Douro, apprised the Duke of Dalmatia of the proximity of an enemy, whose movements were effected with an alarming rapidity, and whose plans were beyond his penetration. To remain at Oporto for the present, and watch their development, was the French marshal's determination; for nothing had occurred which could lead to any belief, but that the obstacle which the Douro presented could only be overcome by a landing at its debouchement. Loison was considered safe at Amarante. The route into *Tras os Montes* was consequently open; and there the artillery and baggage were immediately directed to proceed; while *Mermet's* division, without a halt, was pushed on to *Vallongo* and *Baltar*, to secure the right bank of the river by seizing the boats, and keeping it actively patrolled. *Soult* himself, in full persuasion that danger from the ocean was all that he had to apprehend, retired to a house that commanded an uninterrupted prospect of the sea, and from which he could satisfy himself

that the bridge was effectually destroyed, and watch the pontoons that composed it, as, one after the other, they came burning down the stream. There he remained, in full expectation that on the next day he should see the British fleet at anchor, and witness personally the disembarkation of the allies.

But while the course of the river to its debouchement was fully open to his view, a sharp bending of the stream, immediately above the town, shut out the upper course of the Douro; and the heights of Serra, rising boldly, interposed between Oporto and the country to the eastward. Early on the morning of the 12th, the English advanced guard reached Villa Nova—and at eight o'clock the columns had come up, and the whole were concentrated and ready for action.

But no general, and he victorious, was more painfully situated than Sir Arthur Wellesley. A river, deep, rapid, and three hundred yards across, rolled its dark waters in his front; a bold and vigorous enemy lay beyond it; no means of transport were provided; and on the instant passage of that formidable stream, more than success depended: for not only the enemy might elude his attack, but an isolated corps was endangered,—“Soulst might retire unmolested into Galicia if he pleased—or, by attacking Beresford singly, overpower him by superior force, and enter Beira. Danger often stimulates bravery to startling, but successful enterprises; and, in this emergency, Wellesley decided on as bold an effort as modern warfare parallels,—the crossing of the Douro.”

From the heights which concealed his own troops, Sir Arthur Wellesley commanded an uninterrupted view of the country for miles around—and the Vallonga road at once fixed his attention. Dust rose in thick clouds,—baggage could be seen occasionally,—and the march of Soulst's column was readily detected. Directly opposite the heights of Serra, a building of great extent, encircled by a wall which surrounded a considerable area, was discovered.

"The Seminary" was particularly strong. It had but one entrance, and that communicated with the Vallonga road, and was secured by an iron gate. Could this edifice be occupied, Wellesley might open a passage for his army,—but where were means to be obtained by which troops could be thrown across the stream, and the seizure of that building effected? A barrier, to all appearance impassable, was unfortunately interposed. Where no hope presents itself, the most ardent spirit will yield. Before Wellesley rolled the Douro,—and "Alexander the Great might have turned from it without shame!"

By what trifling agencies have not the boldest projects been successfully carried out! but, in the annals of modern warfare, never was a splendid enterprise achieved, whose opening means were so superlatively contemptible. Colonel Waters, a Portuguese partisan, had communicated to Sir Arthur the information that the bridge had been destroyed, and he had been despatched on what appeared the hopeless errand, of finding some mode of transport. Fortune unexpectedly befriended him: a barber of Oporto had eluded the vigilance of Soult's patrols, and paddled his skiff across the river. Him the colonel found in company with the Prior of Amarante; and the latter, having volunteered his services, the barber consented to assist,—and with these unmilitary associates, Waters crossed the stream, and in half an hour returned, unperceived, with several large barges.

Seizing the boon which fortune offered, Sir Arthur instantly got twenty pieces of cannon placed in battery in the convent gardens, and despatched General John Murray, with the Germans, part of the 14th light dragoons, and two guns, to cross the river at Avintas, and descend by the opposite bank. Not a movement in the city shewed that the enemy apprehended an attack—not a patrol had shewed itself—and an ominous tranquillity bespoke a fatal confidence. A barge was reported ready to attempt a passage. "Let the men cross!" was the laconic order; and that order was

promptly obeyed. An officer and twenty-five of the 3d regiment (Bufs) jumped on board ; and in twelve minutes, they had landed, unseen and unopposed.

A second boat effected its passage with similar celerity and equal fortune ; but the third, in which General Paget had embarked, was discovered by the enemy—and a scene which may be fancied, but not described, ensued. The rattle of the French drums, as they beat to arms, was nearly drowned in the outcries of the citizens, who witnessed the daring effort, which they encouraged by their cheers, but which, unhappily, they wanted means to second. Disregarding order, in their anxiety to reach the threatened point, the French troops poured out of the city, their skirmishers hurrying on in double quick to arrest, if possible, the farther transit of the boats, and crush those already landed, before they could be supported from the other shore. The British artillery thundered from the convent garden ; and the divisions of Paget, Hill, and Sherbrooke, crowded the banks, gazing on a contest in which, for the present, they could take no share.

The seminary was furiously assailed—General Paget was severely wounded—and the command devolved on General Hill. On each side the numbers of the combatants increased ; but on the French side, in fourfold number. To one side of the building, however, the French attack was restricted ; for the guns from the Serra swept the other approaches, and maintained a fire, under which, from its precision and rapidity, the French refused to come forward. Presently the lower portion of the city was abandoned, and the inhabitants pushed boats over the river, and, in large parties, brought the guards across. Three battalions were already established in the seminary. The detached corps, under Murray, was descried moving rapidly down the right bank of the Douro ; and the assailants abandoned the attack, and commenced a disorderly retreat.

“ Horse, foot, and cannon, now rushed tumultuously

towards the rear; the city was hastily evacuated, amidst the enthusiastic cheers of the people: Hill's central column, now strongly reinforced by the passage of the 48th and 66th regiments, debouched fiercely from the seminary, and, by repeated volleys on the flank of the flying columns, threw them into utter confusion; and nothing but the inactivity of Murray,* on the right, who did not make the use he might of his advantageous position on the flank of the retreating host, preserved them from total ruin. As it was, they lost five hundred killed and wounded, five guns, and a large quantity of ammunition, in the action: seven hundred sick were taken in the hospital, and fifty French guns in the arsenal; and so complete and unexpected was the surprise, that Wellington, at four o'clock, quietly sat down to the dinner and table service which had been prepared for Marshal Soult."†

The official details of these brilliant and successful operations were thus given to Lord Castlereagh, in a despatch from Sir Arthur Wellesley, dated Oporto, 12th May, 1809.

"I had the honour to apprise your Lordship, on the 7th instant, that I intended that the army should march on the 9th from Coimbra, to dispossess the enemy of Oporto.

"The advanced guard and the cavalry had marched on the 7th, and the whole had halted on the 8th to afford time for Marshal Beresford with his corps to arrive upon the Upper Douro.

* "If General Murray had then fallen boldly in upon the disordered crowds, their discomfiture would have been complete; but he suffered column after column to pass him, without even a cannon shot, and seemed fearful lest they should turn and push him into the river. General Charles Stewart and Major Hervey, however, impatient of this inactivity, charged with the two squadrons of dragoons, and rode over the enemy's rear-guard, as it was pushing through a narrow road to gain an open space beyond. Laborde was unhorsed, Foy badly wounded; and, on the English side, Major Hervey lost an arm; and his gallant horsemen, receiving no support from Murray, were obliged to fight their way back with loss."—*Napier*.

† Alison's History of Europe.

“ The infantry of the army was formed into three divisions for this expedition ; of which two, the advanced guard, consisting of the King’s German Legion, and Brigadier-General P. Stewart’s brigade, with a brigade of six-pounders, and a brigade of three-pounders, under Lieut.-General Paget, and the cavalry under Lieut.-General Payne, and the brigade of guards, Brigadier-General Campbell’s and Brigadier-General Sontag’s brigades of infantry, with a brigade of six-pounders, under Lieutenant-General Sherbrooke, moved by the high-road from Coimbra to Oporto : and one, composed of Major-General Hill’s and Brigadier-General Cameron’s brigades of infantry, and a brigade of six-pounders, under the command of Major-General Hill, by the road from Coimbra to Aveiro.

“ On the 10th, in the morning, before day-light, the cavalry and advanced guard crossed the Vouga, with the intention to surprise and cut off four regiments of French cavalry, and a battalion of infantry and artillery, cantoned in Albergaria Nova and the neighbouring villages, about eight miles from that river, in the last of which we failed ; but the superiority of the British cavalry was evident throughout the day. We took some prisoners and their cannon from them ; and the advanced guard took up the position of Oliveira.

“ On the same day Major-General Hill, who had embarked at Aveiro on the evening of the 9th, arrived at Ovar, in the rear of the enemy’s right ; and the head of Lieut.-General Sherbrooke’s division passed the Vouga on the same evening.

“ On the 11th, the advanced guard and cavalry continued to move on the high road towards Oporto, with Major-General Hill’s division, in a parallel road which leads to Oporto from Ovar.

“ On the arrival of the advanced guard at Vendas Novas, between Souto Redondo and Grijó, they fell in with the outposts of the enemy’s advanced guard, which were immediately driven in ; and shortly afterwards we discovered

the enemy's advanced guard, consisting of about 4,000 infantry and some squadrons of cavalry, strongly posted on the heights above Grijó, their front being covered by woods and broken ground. The enemy's left flank was turned by a movement well executed by Major-General Murray, with Brigadier-General Langworth's brigade of the King's German Legion; while the 16th Portuguese regiment of Brigadier-General Richard Stewart's brigade attacked their right; and the riflemen of the 95th, and the flank companies of the 29th, 43d, and 52d, of the same brigade, under Major Way, attacked the infantry in the woods, and village in their centre.

"These attacks soon obliged the enemy to give way; and Brigadier-General the Hon. Charles Stewart led two squadrons of the 16th and 20th dragoons, under the command of Major Blake, in the pursuit of the enemy, and destroyed many, and took several prisoners.

"On the night of the 11th the enemy crossed the Douro, and destroyed the bridge over that river.

"It was important, with a view to the operations of Marshal Beresford, that I should cross the Douro immediately; and I had sent Major-General Murray in the morning with a battalion of the King's German Legion, a squadron of cavalry, and two six-pounders, to endeavour to collect boats, and, if possible, to cross the river at Avintas, about four miles above Oporto; and I had as many boats as could be collected brought to the ferry, immediately above the towns of Oporto and Villa Nova.

"The ground on the right bank of the river at this ferry is protected and commanded by the fire of cannon, placed on the height of the Serra convent at Villa Nova; and there appeared to be a good position for our troops on the opposite side of the river, till they should be collected in sufficient numbers.

"The enemy took no notice of our collection of boats, or of the embarkation of the troops, till after the first battalion (the Buffs) were landed, and had taken up their

position under the command of Lieut.-General Paget, on the opposite side of the river.

“ They then commenced an attack upon them, with a large body of cavalry, infantry, and artillery, under the command of Marshal Soult, which that corps most gallantly sustained, till supported successively by the 48th and 66th regiments, belonging to Major-General Hill’s brigade, and a Portuguese battalion of detachments belonging to Brigadier-General Richard Stewart’s brigade.

“ Lieut.-General Paget was unfortunately wounded soon after the attack commenced, when the command of these gallant troops devolved upon Major-General Hill.

“ Although the French made repeated attacks upon them, they made no impression ; and at last, Major-General Murray having appeared on the enemy’s left flank, on his march from Avintas, where he had crossed ; and Lieut.-General Sherbrooke, who by this time had availed himself of the enemy’s weakness in the town of Oporto, and had crossed the Douro at the ferry between the towns of Villa Nova and Oporto, having appeared upon their right with the brigade of guards, and the 29th regiment ; the whole retired in the utmost confusion towards Amarante, leaving behind them five pieces of cannon, eight ammunition tumbrils, and many prisoners.

“ The enemy’s loss in killed and wounded in this action has been very large ; and they have left behind them in Oporto 700 sick and wounded.

“ Brigadier-General the Hon. Charles Stewart then directed a charge by a squadron of the 14th dragoons, under the command of Major Hervey, who made a successful attack on the enemy’s rear-guard.

“ In the different actions with the enemy, of which I have above given your Lordship an account, we have lost some, and the immediate services of other valuable officers and soldiers.*

* Abstract of the killed, wounded, and missing, in the army under the command of Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. Sir A. Wellesley, K.B., in action

“In Lieut.-General Paget, among the latter, I have lost the assistance of a friend, who had been most useful to me in the few days which had elapsed since he had joined the army.

“He had rendered a most important service at the moment he received his wound, in taking up the position which the troops afterwards maintained, and in bearing the first brunt of the enemy’s attack.

“Major Hervey also distinguished himself at the moment he received his wound in the charge of the cavalry on this day.

“I cannot say too much in favour of the officers and troops. They have marched in four days over eighty miles of most difficult country, have gained many important positions, and have engaged and defeated three different bodies of the enemy’s troops.”

The astonishment of the French marshal and his officers at the sudden and complete success which crowned the opening of Wellesley’s operations, was indescribable. One distinguishing quality which marks a veteran army, is the rapidity with which it remedies disaster or surprise, re-organizes its broken battalions, and, with lessened numbers, becomes, in everything besides, as formidable as it was

with the French army, under the command of Marshal Soult, on the 10th, 11th, and 12th of March, 1809.

	Officers.	Serjeants.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-Commission- ed Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	1	—	42	—	43
Wounded . . .	17	1	150	—	168
Missing	—	—	17	—	17
Total	18	1	209		228

Wellington Despatches.

before. Such was the case with Soult's beaten divisions : they rallied and reformed as they fell back by the Vallonga road ; and, covered by a powerful rear-guard, leisurely retreated by Guimaraens, to unite with Loison at Amarante.

But astounding intelligence reached the French marshal on the morning of the 13th. On the preceding day, Beresford, having crossed the river higher up, had fallen upon the French outposts, and obliged Loison to abandon the bridge of Amarante ; and, with his corps, the latter was reported to be in full march in the direction of Oporto.

These were indeed disastrous tidings. Virtually, his retreat was cut off, and Soult's position was imminently dangerous. To recover the bridge, which Loison had unwarrantably given up, was not to be attempted, garrisoned as it was by a mixed corps of regular troops, British and Portuguese. The great road of Braga was now in possession of the enemy ; and, by his own genius and resources, the French marshal must extricate or lose an army !

“ Not a moment was to be lost : already the British outposts began to appear, and the thunder of their horse-artillery was heard at no great distance. The energy of the French general, however, now fully aroused, was equal to the crisis. He instantly resolved to abandon his artillery, ammunition, and baggage, and make his way, with all imaginable expedition, across the mountains to the Braga road. This resolution was immediately adopted ; all the powder which the men could not carry was blown up near Penafiel on the morning of the 13th ; and the French army, abandoning its whole carriages, rapidly ascended the valley of the Sousa by roads almost impracticable, even for the cavalry ; rejoined Loison at Guimaraens ; and continuing its passage over the mountains, and leaving Braga on its left, at length regained the great road at San-Joad del Rey, a short way beyond that town.”*

* Alison's History of Europe.

On learning that Soult had destroyed his stores and artillery at Penafiel, Sir Arthur Wellesley pushed Murray's corps, which he had reinforced with additional cavalry, towards that place; and although he had received no communication from Marshal Beresford, he felt assured that his operations on the Tamaga had proved successful. The main body of the British army moved upon the Minho in two divisions, one by the route to Braga, and the other by the road to Bacellos.

On the 14th, Soult's movements indicated that Chaves or Montalegre would be the line he would adopt; and consequently, the left column was withdrawn from the Bacellos road and marched on Braga, while Beresford's corps was directed on Villa del Rey.

Nothing could be more disheartening than the situation of the French army. The rain came down in torrents,—the roads were scarcely passable,—the soldiers were mostly without shoes,—and, from fatigue and weakness, numbers dropped from the ranks, and from necessity were abandoned. The routes by Braga and Amarante were occupied by the British. The mountain streams were filled with water; the fords generally impassable; and but one line of retreat remained, and that required that the mountain torrent of the Cavado should be crossed by the bridge at Ponte Nova. “This bridge was occupied, and had been partially destroyed by the peasants: unless it could be regained, the hour of surrender had arrived; for the army was struggling through a narrow defile between awful precipices almost in single file; and Wellington, in close pursuit, thundered in the rear, and would infallibly attack next morning.”*

By generals of the common stamp, Soult's prospects would have been considered hopeless and irremediable; but, with that energetic resolution for which the French marshal's character was remarkable, though astounded, he did not despond. Selecting the most daring among his

* Alison's History of Europe.

officers, he gave him one hundred chosen grenadiers, a troop of cavalry, and an order to force the bridge.

Major Dulong proved that Soult had not been deceived in the person to whom this desperate duty had been confided. He reached the bridge in silence; a storm was raging furiously; and, amid the howling gusts of wind, the approaching footsteps of the French grenadiers were unheard by the advanced sentinel, and the soldier was bayoneted at his post. A strip of masonry, barely sufficient for a man to cross by, was all that remained of the bridge; and the waters of the Cavedo, swollen by an angry flood which came down in torrents from the mountains, were roaring awfully beneath it. Unappalled, Dulong crept over this perilous arch. A soldier followed, but not with equal fortune; he lost his footing, and perished. Other brave men were not wanting—eleven crept across—fell unexpectedly upon the Portuguese guard, and, favoured by night and the false security of its defenders, carried a post which a dozen resolute men could have made good against a thousand.*

The repairs of the bridge were quickly effected; but the British artillery were already up; and as the French filed over they suffered an enormous loss.† A second,

* On the night of the 13th Lorge's dragoons, from Braga, fortunately joined the main body of the French army. Their guns and baggage, with those of Loison, were immediately destroyed, Soult resuming the mountain route to Cavalho d'Este. The marshal, in person, took charge of the rear guard, having entrusted the advanced to Loison. The rear, which was pursued by the British, was thus under his own direction; and the head of the column, which was to force its way through the irregulars who infested the line of march, had "a commander, whose very name, called up all the revengeful passions of the Portuguese. *Maneta durst not surrender*; and the Duke of Dalmatia dexterously forced those to act with most zeal who were least inclined to serve him: and, in sooth, such was his perilous situation, that all the resources of his mind, and all the energy of his character, were needed to save the army."—*Napier*.

† "The next morning's dawn renewed the pursuit; and every turn of the road, cumbered with broken vehicles and deserted baggage, showed how severely the French army had been pressed. The bridge was nearly impassable from dead men and slain horses, laid there in heaps by the grape and cannister

and more formidable obstacle barred the route. The mountain path, scarped from the hill-side, terminated in a narrow arch flung across a torrent, called "the Saltador."* It was held by some Portuguese partisans; and two attempts made by Soult to carry it had failed. A third, however, proved successful,—and the French effected their retreat.

The Duke of Dalmatia passed Montalegre on the 17th, and the English general entered it next day. Silveira, on the side of Chaves, operated so slowly, that the chances of intercepting Soult's retreat were ended; and Colonel Talbot, who had been pushed forward with the British cavalry, was outnumbered by that under General Franceschi, and obliged to fall back—and the pursuit, on the part of the English commander, terminated.

The official statement, forwarded to Lord Castlereagh by Sir Arthur Wellesley, gives a compressed but lucid of the British guns. Arms, accoutrements, ham-strung mules, guns, tumbrils, knapsacks filled with silver plate, tapestry, and other valuable plunder, were strewn indiscriminately along the line. To add to this scene of waste and suffering, the villages the advancing army entered, were either in a blaze, or already reduced to ashes; for between the French troops and peasantry a deadly war of extermination was carried on, and on both sides deeds of cruelty were every day perpetrated that can hardly be credited or described. Indeed, the French retreat through the Galician mountains was only paralleled by the British on Corunna; with this exception, that many a straggler from the British columns was saved by the humanity of the Spaniards, while the unhappy Frenchman who lagged but a few hundred yards behind the rear-guard, was butchered by the infuriated peasantry, bent upon slaughter, and burning for vengeance on an enemy who, in his day of conquest and dominion, had taught the lesson of cruelty now practised unrelentingly on himself.—*Victories of the British Armies.*

* "It was a bridge with a low parapet, over a deep ravine, and so narrow as not to admit two horsemen abreast. The enemy had driven away the peasants who were attempting to destroy it, but a fire was kept up upon them by others from the crags of that wild and awful pass; and upon the report of some cannon fired by the advanced guard of the pursuers upon their rear, the French were seized with panic; many threw down their arms and ran; they struggled with each other to cross the bridge, losing all self-command; and the British advance, when they arrived at the spot, found the ravine on both sides choked with men and horses, who had been jostled over in the frantic precipitancy of their flight."—*Southey.*

statement of the results of the allied operations. The despatch, from which the following extract is taken, was dated Montalegre, May 18, 1809 :—

“ I here found that Soult had taken a road through the mountains towards Orense, by which it would be difficult, if not impossible, for me to overtake him, and on which I had no means of stopping him.

“ The enemy commenced this retreat, as I have informed your Lordship, by destroying a great proportion of his guns and ammunition. He afterwards destroyed the remainder of both, and a great proportion of his baggage, and kept nothing excepting what the soldiers or a few mules could carry. He has left behind him his sick and wounded; and the road from Penafiel to Montalegre is strewn with the carcasses of horses and mules, and of French soldiers, who were put to death by the peasantry before our advanced guard could save them.

“ This last circumstance is the natural effect of the species of warfare which the enemy have carried on in this country.

“ Their soldiers have plundered and murdered the peasantry at their pleasure; and I have seen many persons hanging on the trees by the sides of the road, executed for no reason that I could learn, excepting that they have not been friendly to the French invasion and usurpation of the government of their country; and the route of their column, on their retreat, could be traced by the smoke of the villages to which they set fire.

“ We have taken about five hundred prisoners. Upon the whole, the enemy has not lost less than a fourth of his army, and all his artillery and equipments, since we attacked him on the Vouga.

“ I hope your Lordship will believe that no measure which I could take was omitted to intercept the enemy's retreat. It is obvious, however, that if an army throws away all its cannon, equipments, and baggage, and every thing which can strengthen it, and can enable it to act

together as a body; and abandons all those who are entitled to its protection, but add to its weight and impede its progress; it must be able to march by roads through which it cannot be followed, with any prospect of being overtaken, by an army which has not made the same sacrifices.

“It is impossible to say too much of the exertions of the troops. The weather has been very bad indeed. Since the 13th the rain has been constant, and the roads in this difficult country almost impracticable. But they have persevered in the pursuit to the last; and have been generally on their march from day-light in the morning till dark.”*

* Wellington Despatches.



CHAPTER III.

MILITARY ESTIMATE OF WELLESLEY AND SOULT—PURSUIT RELINQUISHED BY THE FORMER—DESPATCH TO GENERAL MACKENZIE—PROCLAMATION ISSUED AT OPORTO—SANGUINARY FEELING TOWARDS THE FRENCH—OPERATIONS OF SOULT AND NEY—DIFFICULTIES OF THE BRITISH GENERAL—PORTUGUESE ARMY—LETTER TO MR. VILLIERS—FIRMNESS OF SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY—CHECKS DISCONTENT AMONG HIS OFFICERS—HIS UPRIGHT PRINCIPLE—INGRATITUDE OF THE MERCHANTS OF OPORTO.

FORTUNE does much in establishing a reputation; and many a name has been made or marred by accident. War is but a game of chance, yet still with odds immeasurably in favour of the skilful and the bold. Science may not attain the end it aims at. To deserve, is not to secure good fortune. Disaster has crowned a fame, which victory might have left in doubt; and in apportioning the merits of a commander, a safer estimate of their value will probably be formed by examining his reverses, rather than by looking only to his success.

Than that brief campaign upon the Douro, there never was any on which two generals might more safely have risked their former fame,—never a series of operations, where, relatively in conquest and defeat, the victor and the vanquished enhanced so much a previous reputation. Wellesley's plans were soundly conceived, and admirably executed; and the extent of his success was only equalled by the rapidity with which it was accomplished. "In twenty-eight days he had restored public confidence, provided a defence against one adversary, and having marched

two hundred miles through a rugged country, and forced the passage of a great river, caused his other opponent to flee over the frontier, without artillery or baggage:" and this was effected in face of a veteran army, under an approved commander, by levies hastily collected, and troops but recently debarked; the former "unformed by discipline, untried in battle, and not three weeks before in a state of open mutiny." With such means Soult was hurried from the scene of his recent successes, and that with a precipitation which, in ruinous results, was only equalled by the disastrous retreat upon Coruña.*

None maintained, however, in defeat, a well-won celebrity better than the Duke of Dalmatia. Surprised by an enemy he had not yet learned to sufficiently respect, he had nothing to depend upon but the discipline of his troops, and the ability of his officers; and in neither, at that moment, was he warranted in reposing trust. While every Portuguese face he looked upon was unfriendly,—while a vindictive enemy was gathering in his front, and a force he dared not abide was pressing on his rear,—a mountain-country before him, over which he must retire,—torrents in quick succession,—roads all but impassable,—his own troops clamorous for a surrender,—Soult's indomitable courage brought him through. If ever an army owed its salvation to a general, that of France was indebted for its deliverance to its leader. Baggage, booty, stores, and artillery, all were recklessly abandoned; what could not be replaced was only brought away; and the marshal reached Orense with "nineteen thousand good soldiers."

* "Soult is gone to Montalegre, Baptiste is upon one flank, and Silveira between him and Chaves; and I shall follow him to-morrow, if he does not turn towards Chaves. He has lost everything,—cannon, ammunition, baggage, military chest; and his retreat is, in every respect, even in weather, a *pendant* for the retreat to Coruña. If I do not overtake him or intercept him, I shall at least have forced him into Galicia, in a state so crippled that he can do no harm, and he may be destroyed by Romana, if he has any force at all."—*Despatch, Ruivães, May 17, 1809.*

He who had passed the frontier with twenty-six thousand chosen troops, and sixty pieces of artillery, retired without a gun, but with "a reputation, as a stout and able soldier, in no wise diminished."*

The rapid marching of troops, unencumbered with the *matériel* an army must carry with it to be serviceable, soon outstrips the pursuit of a body perfect in all its equipment for the field, and Sir Arthur Wellesley discontinued further efforts to overtake his more active enemy. A threatening movement on Estremadura, had confirmed him in his determination to return directly to the Tagus. In his despatch of the 19th of May to Major-General Mackenzie, he announces his intention, although doubtful at that time of the correctness of the intelligence he had received, that Victor had actually broken up on the Guadiana, and secured the passage of the Tagus by driving the Portuguese garrison from the bridge of Alcantara on the 14th, which, in their confusion, they had failed in blowing up.

"I received this morning, near Montalegre, your letters of the 15th, the one announcing the approach of the French to Alcantara, and the other their being in possession of the bridge. I acknowledge that I do not give entire credit to the latter report: first, as you do not mention your authority; secondly, because they could not be in possession of the bridge without first taking the fort; and I think you would have heard of that misfortune, or the probability of the occurrence, before you heard of its consequence.

"However, my operations against Soult finished yesterday. I followed him as long as there was any corps that I thought was likely to stop or impede his march; and I discontinued the pursuit yesterday, after he had passed the Portuguese frontier, on his road to Orense, finding that there were no longer any hopes of overtaking him.

"We beat his rear-guard on the 6th at Salamonde, and

* Napier.

should have cut it off, if we had had one hour more daylight. Our loss in this affair was trifling.

“ I have come here this day in consequence of your letters, and I shall not stop until I reach the Tagus. The troops will, to-morrow, commence their march towards the same point, and before a week shall have elapsed, some of them will be to the southward of the Mondego.

“ If you should be menaced on the side of Alentejo, break up the bridge of Abrantes, and secure the boats upon the Tagus; and if you have had only half the rain that we have had, I defy the French to cross. If you are attacked only on the side of Alcantara, you have nothing to fear; the enemy cannot penetrate by that road, if vigorously opposed.”*

In accordance with this decision, the British brigades behind Salamonde were ordered to retrograde towards Oporto, and were immediately followed by the corps under Marshal Beresford. The military government of the city had been entrusted to Colonel Trant; and during his brief halt upon the 13th, the following Proclamation was issued by the commander-in-chief, as Marshal General of the armies of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent of Portugal.

“ Inhabitants of Oporto!—The French troops having been expelled from this town by the superior gallantry and discipline of the army under my command, I call upon the inhabitants of Oporto to be merciful to the wounded and prisoners. By the laws of war they are entitled to my protection, which I am determined to afford them; and it will be worthy of the generosity and bravery of the Portuguese nation not to revenge the injuries which have been done to them on these unfortunate persons, who can only be considered as instruments in the hands of the more powerful, who are still in arms against us.

* Wellington Despatches.

" I therefore call upon the inhabitants of this town to remain peaceably in their dwellings. I forbid all persons, not military, to appear in the streets with arms; and I give notice, that I shall consider any person who shall injure any of the wounded, or of the prisoners, as guilty of the breach of my orders.

" I have appointed Colonel Trant to command in this town till the pleasure of the government shall be known; and I have ordered him to take care that this proclamation is obeyed."

Indeed, the sanguinary spirit exhibited on every occasion by the Portuguese towards the invaders, required all Sir Arthur Wellesley's determination to repress it, and prevent the contest on the Peninsula from assuming a ferocious character, abhorrent to every feeling of humanity, and opposed to the usages of civilized warfare. That "the French disgraced a gallant retreat by savage cruelty," cannot be denied—but, that they were in many cases provoked to retaliate in self-defence, is equally certain. In Galicia, as in Portugal, the ferocity of the populace was terrible; and the sixth corps actually lost a greater number of men by private assassination, than by casualties in the field. The partisans proclaimed their cruelties without a blush;* and monks and priests advocated openly a war of extermination. Men with arms in their hands, too frequently appeal to them—the murder of a comrade naturally produced the ruin of a hamlet; and, in turn, the

* "Colonel Barrios afterwards told Mr. Frere, that, to repress the excesses of Marshal Ney's troops, he himself had, *in cold blood*, caused seven hundred French prisoners to be drowned in the Minho; an avowal recorded by Mr. Frere without animadversion, but which, happily for the cause of humanity, there is good reason to believe was as false as it was disgraceful."¹ "The wish was father to the thought," and he who made and he who received the communication, should share the palm of infamy.

¹ Napier.

exasperated villagers watched for, and obtained revenge. Collecting together, they "hung upon the rear and flanks of the retreating army, and every straggler who fell into their hands, was put to death under circumstances of the most terrible atrocity. It was no uncommon thing to come upon French soldiers lying by the road side, not dead, but fearfully mutilated; whilst such corpses as bore marks of violence, seemed to have died under lingering torture. The retreat from Sahagun was bad enough—few retreats, perhaps, in modern times, have been more harassing; but that of Soult through the mountains of Galicia must have been fully as disastrous."*

Soult had no time allowed him to rest his wearied soldiers; for, after one day's halt at Orense, he marched with his stoutest troops on the 21st, to relieve Fournier, who was closely shut up in Lugo by General Mahi, with a Spanish corps. On the appearance of the French van-guard above the heights, the Spanish general fell back to Mondenedo; and Soult entered Lugo the next day in a more distressed condition "than that in which General Moore had traversed the same town six months before."†

While the Duke of Dalmatia was actively engaged across the frontier, Marshal Ney had been occupied by the Marquis Romana, who, recovering from his defeat at Monterey,‡ rallied in sufficient force on the borders of Leon, to enable him to surprise and capture two French battalions at Villa Franca.§ On hearing of this unexpected disaster, Ney advanced to Lugo, obliging Romana to abandon Galicia by the pass of Cienfuegos. At Navia de Suarna, the Marquis resigned his command to Mahi,

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

† Jomini.

‡ Sixth of March.

§ "Villa Franca del Rierzo is a considerable town, very romantically situated, and watered by a clear stream of some magnitude. It is surrounded by rising grounds, clothed with the finest wood. The Plaza Mayor is large and regular, both in its area and buildings; and is superior to the square of most Spanish towns of a similar class."

and repaired to Oveido, on the hopeless errand of reforming the Asturian Junta.

Alarmed by the activity of this upright and able partisan, Ney determined to crush his efforts in the Asturias, and destroy the Spanish army posted on the Galician frontier. A combined operation was arranged, by which Kellerman should enter the Asturias by the south-east—Bonnet, by the coast road, penetrate by Santander—while Ney, in person, should march direct by Lugo, that being the shortest but most difficult route of the three.

Mahi, upon Soult's advance, saved himself in the valley of the Syl—while the Marshal pressed onwards towards Oveido, and reached within a march of that place before Romana was even apprized of his danger. A British vessel saved him; and after a fruitless attempt to defend the bridge at Penaflor, the Marquis escaped to Gihon.

Aided by two British frigates, Ballasteros retook Santander; but Bonnet pressed him so closely, that he, too, owed his safety to an English ship, and the garrison and the sick, including the French troops taken at Villa Franca, were recaptured. Ney, in the mean time, returned to Coruña, and Kellerman fell back to Valladolid.

The Spanish generals had, however, operated in the interim, with some success. Carrera defeated a small corps under Maucune; and Mahi, strengthened by a peasant insurrection, had invested Fournier in Lugo.

After the latter place had been relieved, Soult was joined by Ney, on the 30th; and Romana returned to Ribadeo, where he disembarked, and once more gained the valley of the Syl, and renewed his communications with Carrera.

From the vanquished we return to the victor; and never was the path of a successful commander more thickly strewn with thorns. Hydra-headed, difficulties arose on every hand. Sir Arthur Wellesley found himself with a dangerous population to conciliate—monetary embarrassments to encounter—a villainous commissariat to reform—

a licentious soldiery to coerce—and, as if the measure of his annoyances were not overheaped, the serious dissatisfaction of his own superior officers to contend with.

In attempting a reformation of Portuguese abuses, and as a primary step to render the national army effective, it was necessary to provide British officers for its organization; and, without flattering inducements were held out, none would leave their own service for another, doubtful both as to its permanency and advantages. Strong temptations were, consequently, offered to such officers as would consent. If a captain volunteered from the line, he was, in the first instance, gazetted to an English majority; and when he joined his battalion, promoted to a Portuguese lieutenant-colonelcy. In an army, where both services were incorporated, and battalions of both countries were brigaded, this placing of junior officers over the heads of those who had hitherto commanded them, could not but be productive of jealousy and dissatisfaction; and among the generals, more than one resigned their commissions and retired.

Yet, the dilemma was perfect; either Portugal was or was not to have an army. The mode by which that army alone could be organized was objectionable; and the question was, whether the country was to leave its military resources in abeyance, or render them available by means both anomalous and unpopular. In a letter to Mr. Villiers, Sir Arthur Wellesley states the difficulties of his own position, and candidly admits the strong grounds, on which English officers had a right to remonstrate against what all felt to be, an unjust and dangerous innovation.

“ I am very much afraid that I did not sufficiently explain myself on the subject of the rank of British officers in the Portuguese service. I have no pretensions to decide upon the question of difference which arises upon it; but when it is referred to me, I must give my opinion upon it; and I am concerned if it differs from yours. I have no desire that it should be decided by me: decide it yourself,

or let it be referred to the ministers in England, and I shall act cordially upon any decision that may be passed upon it.

“ The practice has been to take a captain from the British army to make him a British major, and then to make him a Portuguese lieutenant-colonel. A British lieutenant is, by the same process, made a Portuguese major; and Lieut.-Colonel Blunt and Lieut.-Colonel Campbell are made Portuguese brigadiers over the heads of all the colonels, and all the senior lieutenant-colonels of the British army serving in Portugal.

“ The rank thus given to these officers is not permanent; for they may return to the king's service to-morrow. They have not entered permanently into the Portuguese service. If they had, I should not have a word to say; but after having, during the service in Portugal, commanded their permanent superiors in the British service, they are to return to that service to be commanded by those superiors.

“ I do not dispute the rank of the Portuguese commission; on the contrary, I assert it: but I wish that an arrangement should be made, which would satisfy the officers of this army, respecting the rank they are to hold in relation to their juniors in the British service who hold superior military rank in the Portuguese service.

“ It may be asked, Why are they to require satisfaction? To which I only answer, that men's minds are so constituted, that when they conceive they are injured, they are not satisfied until the injury is removed. Dissatisfaction on one subject begets it on others; and I should have (indeed I may say I have, for the first time) the pain of commanding a dissatisfied army.

“ If military rank and preeminence is an object (and it is an object on service in the field against the enemy, or it is none at all,) these officers are injured by the temporary supersession of themselves by their juniors in the British service; and all that I ask is, either that British officers entering the Portuguese service shall serve in the same

rank which they hold in that of his Majesty ; or, if superior rank should be given to them in the Portuguese service, it should be understood that, when they meet British officers of superior British rank to themselves, they are to receive their orders.

“ The effect of this last arrangement would be to give, for that moment, Portuguese rank to the British officer who should thus exercise the command.

“ I mentioned Beresford’s local rank only as an instance of the dissatisfaction unnecessarily created by such arrangements. It is of no use to Beresford ; for, as field-marshal and commander-in-chief of the Portuguese army, he must command every body excepting the commander-in-chief of the British army, and that by virtue of a special arrangement ; and I observe that the same feeling exists respecting it in England, for it has virtually been done away respecting all major-generals senior to him, by a late order.

“ The dissatisfaction, however, occasioned by the grant of this rank, is undoubted. It is the cause of the resignation of one general officer, ———, who, by-the-by, was by no means affected by it ; and Major-General Murray, who will be a loss, is determined to resign, and go away, notwithstanding that, as I have above told you, the rank has now no effect with respect to him. But these two instances will be sufficient to show you in what manner dissatisfaction, once excited, works in a British army ; and I must say that, from the highest to the lowest, dissatisfaction does now exist in the British army.

“ We are not naturally a military people ; the whole business of an army upon service is foreign to our habits, and is a constraint upon them, particularly in a poor country like this. This constraint naturally excites a temper ready to receive any impressions which will create dissatisfaction ; and when dissatisfaction exists in an army, the task of the commander is difficult indeed.” *

* Wellington Despatches, Coimbra, 30th May, 1809.

It required no ordinary firmness and good sense to arrest the progress of this discontent, and check the remonstrances of individuals, which, however excusable, it would have been dangerous to encourage. Sir Arthur Wellesley's determination had the desired effect; and the tone of the following letter, dated Coimbra, 29th of May, and addressed to Marshal Beresford, evinces a fixed resolution to maintain that authority unquestioned, without which a commanding officer can never hope to preserve subordination in an army.

“ I have had the honour of receiving your letter, enclosing one from Major-General ———, expressing the desire of that officer to be relieved from the command of the brigade placed under his orders, and to be allowed to return to England, if it is intended to employ his services in future in cooperation with the Portuguese troops.

“ As the commander-in-chief of the British and Portuguese allied army in this country, it is impossible for me to engage to any officer that the troops under his command shall not be employed in concert or cooperation with any particular description of troops. In that capacity, I consider myself wholly and solely responsible that his Majesty's troops shall not be employed in improper situations; and the major-generals, or other inferior officers, responsible only that they, and those under them, do their duty in the situation in which they may be employed.

“ I request you, therefore, to inform Major-General ———, that he has my leave to resign the command of his brigade, and to go to England when he thinks proper; and that I desire he will deliver over the command to the senior officer of the brigade present.”

Between Sir Arthur Wellesley, and the French generals to whom he was opposed, comparisons were freely made; and, at the time, varied estimates were formed in reference to their respective qualifications. There was one point, in

which the character of the British general however, stood out in bold relief; and while the French marshals were obnoxious to charges, all of exaction, and many of downright robbery, Wellesley came stainless through an ordeal under which men of less fixed principle must have suffered. No personal advantage, no privations his troops endured however strongly they might have pained him, ever induced the British general to swerve from that integrity of promise and performance, that eventually made the English name venerated upon the Peninsula for its fidelity, as much, as its puissance and success in arms caused it afterwards to be respected from the Tagus to the Seine.

A striking instance of this lofty independence in the English general occurred immediately after the capture of Oporto. He addressed the following letter to Mr. Villiers; and personal considerations would have urged very different opinions to those which this statement contained. The document is thus far singular, that it advocates the cause of those, whose defeat,—had the decision of the ambassador been unfriendly to their interests,—would have been a source of enormous aggrandizement to the writer.

“ Upon the capture of Oporto we found here several English, some Danish, Swedish, and one or two French vessels, and a considerable quantity of property, some of which had been loaded in these ships; and another part, principally cotton, which the French had bought in different parts of the country, and had collected here in charge of the French consul. I wrote to the admiral, some days ago, to recommend that he should order the captain commanding off the port to send an officer on shore to take an account of the vessels and their contents, in concert with Colonel Trant; and I received an answer yesterday from him, stating that he had desired his secretary to correspond with Colonel Trant respecting these vessels.

“ The most valuable part of this property is three thousand tuns of wine, belonging, I believe, to the English

merchants; upon which, the admiral, on the notion that all the property at Oporto is liable to be considered and dealt with by the rules of prize, thinks us entitled to salvage. My opinion is, that if we are entitled to it at all, we are entitled to the whole of the property: but the doubt which I entertain is, whether we have a right to any part of this property; and upon this doubt I wish to have your opinion.

“It appears to me that Oporto, being a Portuguese port, and the British army acting in this country as allies, or even as a subsidiary army to the government of Portugal, every thing taken in Oporto belongs to the government of Portugal; and must be dealt with as that government chooses, and not according to the rules which govern cases in which his Majesty’s sea and land forces take a port or town from the enemy, which afterwards becomes a part of his own dominions.

“I wish you to consider the question, not only as one of civil law, but also in reference to the manner in which the Portuguese government would feel, if we were to consider the property which we found here in possession of the enemy as prize; for however glad I shall be that the success of the army should turn out to their benefit, as well as to their honour, and however convenient it might be to me to share in this benefit myself, I am very unwilling to be instrumental in forwarding such a claim, if it is to have the effect of putting our friends out of temper with us.”

It was estimated that the property saved to the Wine Company and merchants of Oporto, by Sir Arthur Wellesley’s rapid operations and the recapture of the city, exceeded in value half a million sterling; and when afterwards, in his distress, the British general applied to these persons for a temporary loan, which they could have easily spared, with difficulty, he “shamed” them into an advance of ten or twelve thousand pounds—which was faithfully repaid. This very loan, the Portuguese government

represented as a dreadful hardship ; and this was the entire “ amount of the *dureté* which had been put upon them.”*

Victor’s remark, that “ the British did not know how to deal with the Spaniards,” might have been extended with justice to the Portuguese.

* Despatch to Mr. Villiers, Oporto, May 23, 1809.



CHAPTER IV.

VICTOR'S OPERATIONS—WELLESLEY MOVES TOWARDS THE TAGUS—SICKNESS AND INSUBORDINATION OF THE TROOPS—DISTRESSES OF THE ARMY—PRINCIPALLY FROM WANT OF MONEY—FRENCH AND SPANISH POSITIONS—PLANS OF OPERATIONS CONSIDERED—WELLESLEY AND CUESTA DISAGREE—SIR ARTHUR REPAIRS TO THE SPANISH CAMP—HIS RECEPTION THERE—SPANISH ARMY—CONFERENCE WITH CUESTA—ATTACK ON VICTOR ARRANGED—LETTER TO LORD CASTLEREAGH.

AFTER the seizure of the bridge at Alcantara, Victor advanced into Beira, and pushed forward his patrols towards Castello Branco. The news of Soult's misfortunes and retreat, added to the intelligence he received that General Mackenzie was in force at Sobriera Formosa, determined the Duke of Belluno to recross the Tagus, and occupy Merida again. Accordingly, the Marshal abandoned Alcantara, which was immediately garrisoned by Colonel Mayne, and returned to Merida in time to relieve its castle, which, during his absence, had been attacked by a corps detached by Cuesta for that purpose. The Spaniards crossed the Guadiana, and occupied Zafra; while Victor, having established a division at Almarez to secure the bridge, fixed his head quarters at Torremocha.

Sir Arthur Wellesley, in the mean while, approached the Tagus by easy marches; for bad weather, and the recent fatigues which the English army had undergone, and to which, previous service had not inured them, had materially reduced the efficiency of many of the regiments. Sickness was generally prevalent, and the mortality

among the troops great; but it was not the diminution of physical strength only which the British General had to regret—the *morale* of the army was sadly deteriorated—the soldiery had become disorderly and unmanageable—and robbery and violence were matters of such frequent recurrence, as to cause serious uneasiness to the commander-in-chief. Indeed, the misconduct of the troops was now so flagrant, that nothing but the severest measures could reform it; and to repress the licentiousness of some regiments, punishment was inflicted to the utmost extent. The Provost Marshal, a functionary to the credit of the British army but seldom needed, had now extensive employment; for the halter alone could deter men from the commission of crime, on whom all means beside had been tried without effect. The frequent allusions made in his correspondence to this insubordination of the troops, shews the extent to which the mischief had arrived, and proves how much the exertions of Sir Arthur Wellesley must have been taxed to reclaim the soldiery, and reestablish that discipline and good order, for which the British army was afterwards so preeminently distinguished.

“ It is impossible to describe to you the irregularities and outrages committed by the troops. They are never out of the sight of their officers—I may almost say, never out of the sight of the commanding officers of their regiments, and the general officers of the army, that outrages are not committed; and notwithstanding the pains which I take, of which there will be ample evidence in my orderly-books, not a post or a courier comes in—not an officer arrives from the rear of the army, that does not bring me accounts of outrages committed by the soldiers who have been left behind on the march, having been sick, or having straggled from their regiments, or who have been left in hospitals.

“ We have a Provost Marshal, and no less than four assistants. I never allow a man to march with the baggage. I never leave an hospital without a number of

officers, and non-commanding officers, proportionable to the number of soldiers; and never allow a detachment to march unless under the command of an officer; and yet there is not an outrage of any description which has not been committed." * * * * *

"I have long been of opinion, that a British army could bear neither success nor failure; and I have had manifest proofs of the truth of this opinion, in the first of its branches, in the recent conduct of the soldiers of this army. They have plundered the country most terribly, which has given me the greatest concern. The town-major of Lisbon, if he has the orders, will show you, if you wish to read them, those that I have given out upon this subject.

"They have plundered the people of bullocks, among other property, for what reason I am sure I do not know, except it be, as I understand is their practice, to sell them to the people again. I shall be very much obliged to you if you will mention this practice to the ministers of the regency, and beg them to issue a proclamation, forbidding the people, in the most positive terms, to purchase any thing from the soldiers of the British army." †

"I trouble you now upon a subject which has given me the greatest pain; I mean the accounts which I receive from all quarters of the disorders committed by, and the general irregularity of, the — and — regiments. I have ordered a Provost to Castello Branco to put himself under your orders, and I hope you will not fail to make use of him.

"I beg that, on the receipt of this letter, you will call on the commanding officers of the — and — regiments, and apprise them of the concern with which I have heard these reports of their regiments; and of my determination, if I should hear any more of them, to send their regiments into garrison; and to report them to his Majesty as unfit for

* "Abrantes, one of the most beautifully situated towns in Portugal. Seated on an eminence overhanging the Tagus, it commands one of the most extensive and varied prospects to be imagined."

† Coimbra, 31st May.

service in the field, on account of irregularity of conduct and disorder.

“I desire that, upon the receipt of this letter, the — and — regiments may be halted outside of the town of Castellco Branco, if there should be wood in the neighbourhood, not fruit trees, and the rolls to be called every hour, from sunrise till eight in the evening; all officers, as well as soldiers, to attend.

“The number of men absent from these regiments, in consequence of their late marches, is scandalous; and I desire that an officer from each of them may go back immediately the whole road by which the brigade has moved since the 5th of May, in search of the missing men. Those missing on the late march and ground between Guarda and Castello Branco, must be sent on immediately to Castello Branco; and those missing on the former march must be collected at Guarda, and afterwards brought up by the officers to the regiment when they shall return through that town.”*

While Sir Arthur Wellesley was engaged in accommodating the differences upon points of rank, which had arisen among the superior officers of the British service, and repressing the disorders of the troops, time insensibly was passing on, and still the army remained in the encampment at Abrantes. Other difficulties had arisen. Reinforcements, amounting to fully five thousand men, had reached head quarters; but nearly an equal number were in hospital, and fifteen hundred were detached on escort and other duties. The commissariat was in every thing defective; the means of transport insufficient; the army were without shoes; and, worse than all, Sir Arthur Wellesley's money was exhausted, and he was without any means by which he could obtain a fresh supply. “With an empty military chest, nothing can be undertaken,”—and

* Abrantes, 16th June.

though the monthly expenditure exceeded two hundred thousand pounds, including a loan of twelve thousand pounds from the merchants of Oporto, the entire funds he had received for the maintenance of his army during the months of May and June, had scarcely amounted to one hundred and sixty thousand pounds.

The operations of the English General were consequently impeded for above a month, and solely from this serious want—a hardship of which he bitterly complained,* “and which led him to suspect at the time that government had engaged in an enterprise beyond their strength. In truth, however, the finances of Great Britain, as the event proved, were fully equal to the strain, and the difficulty arose entirely from the extraordinary scarcity of *specie*, at that crisis, in the British islands, arising partly from the profuse issue of paper to carry on the prodigious mercantile operations and national expenditure of the period, and partly from the vast consumption and requisitions of the French and Austrian armies during the campaign on the Danube.”†

Sir Arthur Wellesley’s despatch to Lord Castlereagh details briefly the respective movements of the French and Spanish armies during this interval.

* “I trust that one hundred thousand pounds will have been sent immediately after you received my last letter, and that you will send two hundred thousand pounds more as soon as possible. I borrowed from the merchants of Oporto all that I could get; but the sum was very small indeed, and we are in the greatest distress.”¹

“Nothing detains me now but the non-arrival of the money. It will hardly be believed, and I am ashamed to tell it, that the money which left Lisbon on the 15th of this month is not yet arrived!!”²

“I should now be ready to move into Spain in two or three days if I had any money; but the distress in which we are from want of that necessary article, will, I fear, render it impossible for me to move till I shall receive a supply.”³

† Alison’s History of Europe.

¹ Coimbra, 30th May.

² Abrantes, 24th June.

³ Abrantes, 11th June.

“ The enemy’s corps, commanded by Marshal Victor, have continued their retreat from the Guadiana across the Tagus at Almaraz, and along that river towards Talavera; while the corps commanded by Sebastiani have likewise retired towards the Tagus. The retreat of both these corps has been gradual, and they have sustained no loss, although the former has been followed by the army of General Cuesta, and the latter by that of General Venegas.

“ General Cuesta’s advanced guard crossed the Tagus at Almaraz, on the 26th of June, and the main body were to follow as soon as the bridge of boats should be completed. General Venegas’s corps were, on the 22d, the last day on which I heard of them, at Villarla.

* * * * *

“ The whole of the army of General Cuesta crossed the Tagus at Almaraz on the 29th, excepting three divisions, amounting to 10,000 men, which were higher up the river, at and in the neighbourhood of Arzobispo, on the left bank; and his advanced posts were at Novalmoral, on the right bank; and he occupied some villages still nearer to Talavera. The general had determined, however, upon hearing of the collection of the French troops at Talavera, to recross the Tagus; and Colonel Roche expected that that operation would be completed by that night.”*

While waiting for the means, without which it was impossible to advance, Wellesley had ample time to consider the course of operations best to be adopted; and he despatched two officers in his confidence to make the necessary arrangements for a combined movement with Cuesta, captain-general of the army with which he was to unite. Three lines were open by which the British leader might assail the Duke of Belluno. He might cross the Tagus, join Cuesta, and attack Victor in front—Elvas and Badajoz being the bases of his operations. Or

* Castello Branco, 1st July, 1809.

while Cuesta and Venegas held the first and fourth French corps in check, he might operate by the line of Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo, assisted by the corps of Beresford, the Duc del Parque, and Romana; or by uniting himself to Cuesta, march by Plasencia and Almaraz towards Madrid, while Venegas supported him by La Mancha. The two first of these plans were objectionable; and Sir Arthur Wellesley, in his instructions to Colonel Bourke, gave lucid reasons for preferring the line of Plasencia.*

“ In regard to the plan proposed, that the British army should cross the Tagus at Alcantara, and cooperate from thence in an attack upon Victor, it appears to me to be equally inefficient with the other; with this addition to it, that as there is no road along the south bank of the Tagus, (according to your answers to my queries,) the two armies would be separated, and therefore each comparatively weak; while my appearance at Alcantara would not affect the enemy's line of retreat, as I must go down as far as Caceres before I could turn towards the Tagus again.

“ Of the three propositions made to me, I decidedly prefer that which takes the British army to Plasencia. By this movement, if it should be concealed from the enemy for a sufficient length of time, we must cut off his retreat by the bridge of Almaraz, and possibly by Arzobispo and Talavera.

“ If it should not be concealed, at all events the enemy cannot pretend to defend the Tagus. It is unattended by risk, as both armies are, I conceive, sufficiently strong to defend themselves separately against any attack which

* “ Plasencia, a large town, in the centre of fertile plains, surrounded by mountains. Plasencia must ever be celebrated, from the circumstance of the emperor Charles V. having selected it as the place of retirement to which he dedicated the last years of his eventful and brilliant life; nor does it appear that, in the whole extent of his Spanish territories, a more favourable spot could have been chosen—either with reference to climate, beauty of situation, or retirement of position. If ever there was a retired city, it is Plasencia. Its cathedral is a fine building, but not of first-rate magnificence.”—*Leith Hay*.

Victor might make upon them; and the probability of want is lessened for both armies, as we shall be in a country which has hitherto been untouched; and the Spanish army, having only themselves to supply in Estremadura, will incur less risk of want, than if we also were to be supplied from the same resources.

“ Another plan has occurred to me by which we should turn the enemy’s left flank, and that is, to reinforce Venegas’s corps from the right of General Cuesta to such an extent as to enable him to beat Sebastiani, and then to bring Venegas’s army upon the Tagus, about Talavera; or if that cannot be done, for General Cuesta to move himself, with his whole army, by La Serena, and through the mountains to Talavera, leaving me to occupy, with the British army, the ground in the enemy’s front.

“ I suggest these last plans, only because an operation upon the enemy’s left appears to be preferred to an operation upon his right and rear, at the Spanish head quarters; but I conceive there are the following objections to both plans:—To the first, that the detachment could not be made to Venegas, till I should be so near as to give the enemy a knowledge of my position; and to the second there is the same objection, that General Cuesta could not move till I should be ready to occupy his ground; and that he would, in fact, place himself, when weak in artillery, between the two French armies.”*

* * * * *

The force under Victor and Sebastiani was estimated, from the best information, to be under forty-five thousand men. The Duke of Belluno had, in the vicinity of Merida, some twenty-eight thousand; and Sebastiani’s corps at Ciudad Rodrigo did not exceed sixteen thousand effective troops. The corps were, however, not only detached from each other, but means by which they could be united were wanting. Sebastiani must have taken a circuitous route

* Extract from Despatch to Lieut.-Col. Bourke, Abrantes, 9th June.

by Madrid, had he attempted to carry with him his artillery and baggage; for the mountain route was barely passable for infantry and horsemen. Hence, Sir Arthur Wellesley prudently adopted that line of operations by which, moving on Plasencia, he might force Victor to accept battle, or retire; while Cuesta should move against Sebastiani, fight a separate action, and thus oblige the first and fourth corps to engage their opponents in detail.

Unfortunately, no unanimity in views or objects existed between the British and Spanish commanders. "Whilst Cuesta desired, above all things, that the armies of the two nations should be united—that they should fight side by side, and follow up to the utmost any advantages which they might obtain, Sir Arthur Wellesley was guided by other motives, and restricted his designs to a narrower, but a much safer and surer field."*

A state of painful uncertainty continued. Reports were brought to the British head quarters, which, if they could be believed, threatened immediate movements on all sides. Victor, it was said, intended to cross the Guadiana, and attack Cuesta; while Ney and Soult were pressing the siege of Vigo, with the determination, immediately upon its fall, of crossing the Minho, and invading the north of Portugal.

This was serious intelligence, if true; and nothing could be less satisfactory than Cuesta's communications with the officers whom Sir Arthur Wellesley had despatched to the Spanish camp. Age and infirmities had clouded intellects never remarkable for acuteness; and the plainest military truths were explained again and again, before Cuesta could understand their import. Unfortunately, he had entertained some stupid prejudices against the English generally; and hence, any proposition emanating with Sir Arthur Wellesley, which did not exactly accord with the humour he might be in at the moment it was made, was resisted

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

with insurmountable obstinacy. Several of his younger officers, and particularly General Odonaju, used their best exertions to render the old man more manageable, but it was seldom that they were attended to. Under these annoying circumstances, Wellesley determined to proceed to his camp, and try how far his personal influence might succeed in persuading Cuesta to abandon plans which could only end in disaster, and adopt operations which presented a better prospect of success.

On the 10th of June, the British general set out to visit his ally, and was received at the flying bridge upon the Teitar, by a Spanish escort of light cavalry, who contrived to lose their way, and detain him on the road until night had fallen. On reaching the Spanish camp, it presented a very curious spectacle. His reception by Cuesta, and his subsequent interview, are graphically described by a staff-officer,* who accompanied the British general; and it presents an interesting picture of the internal economy of the allied camp, as well as of the habits and manners of the singular old man, to whom the command of the army had been entrusted.

“ Our arrival at the camp was announced by a general discharge of artillery, upon which an immense number of torches were made to blaze up; and we passed the entire Spanish line in review by their light. The effect produced by these arrangements was one of no ordinary character. As the torches were held aloft, at moderate intervals from one another, they threw a red and wavering light over the whole scene, permitting, at the same time, its minuter parts to be here and there cast into shade; whilst the grim and swarthy visages of the soldiers, their bright arms and dark uniforms, appeared peculiarly picturesque as often as the flashes fell upon them.

“ Nor was old Cuesta himself an object to be passed by without notice, even at such a moment and under such

* The Marquis of Londonderry.

circumstances as these. The old man preceded us,—not so much sitting on his horse as held upon it by two pages, at the imminent hazard of being overthrown whenever a cannon was discharged, or a torch flared out with peculiar brightness. Indeed his physical debility was so remarkable, as clearly to mark his total unfitness for the situation which he then held. As to his mental powers, he gave us little opportunity of judging; inasmuch as he scarcely uttered five words during the continuance of our visit; but his corporeal infirmities alone were at absolute variance with all a general's duties, and showed that he was now fit only for the retirement of private life."

In physical appearance the Spanish army was uncommonly imposing, "being, with a few exceptions, remarkably fine men;" but though well armed, they were badly appointed, irregularly clothed, mostly without shoes, and it was easy to perceive, "from the attitude in which they stood, as well as from the manner in which they held their arms, that little or no discipline prevailed among them." The Irish and marine battalions were exceptions; but the cavalry and artillery, with excellent horses, were in other points very inefficient; and the generals appeared to have been selected purely on account of their seniority, or rather their personal infirmities.

A long conference took place* after breakfast on the 11th;

* "My correspondence with General Cuesta has been a very curious one, and proves him to be as obstinate as any gentleman at the head of any army need be. He would not alter his position even to ensure the safety of his army, because he supposed that this measure might be injurious to himself, notwithstanding that this alteration would have been part of an operation which must have ended in the annihilation of Victor's army if he stood our attack, or, in his retreat through the mountains to Arzobispo, with the loss of all his cannon and baggage, if he went away.

"I hope I acted right in giving way, more particularly as the operation was to be carried on in Spain, and the argument urged to me was, that the safety of Cuesta's army depended upon my compliance. The best of the whole story is, that Cuesta, in a letter of the 27th May, which I did not receive till after I had written to him to propose my plan of operations, proposed to me the same plan with very little alteration."—*Wellington Despatches.*

and it terminated apparently to the satisfaction of both commanders. "When it came to a close, dinner was announced; and we sat down, about three o'clock, to about forty dishes, the principal ingredients in which were garlic and onions. Our meal did not occupy us long; and on Cuesta retiring, as was his custom, to enjoy his siesta, we mounted our horses, and rode out into the camp. By this means we were enabled to see more of the regiments separately than we had seen during the torch-light review. We saw, however, nothing which served in any degree to raise our opinion of the general efficiency of our allies; and we returned to our host, at a late hour, more than ever impressed with the persuasion, that if the deliverance of the Peninsula was to be effected at all, it must be done, not by the Spaniards, but by ourselves."*

The interview at the Casa del Puerto seemed to have confirmed Sir Arthur Wellesley in a determination to force Victor to a battle. Indeed, that he should not have done so before, was a subject of surprise to many. But the difficulties their general had to contend with were overlooked, his own responsibility never taken into consideration, and in an eagerness for action, the consequences of hasty operations were neither weighed nor regarded by those whose ardour had outstripped their judgment. Sir Arthur Wellesley exercised that cautious discretion which public opinion, no matter how strongly expressed, could never shake. He knew his own means; he formed a just opinion of how little he had to expect from the efforts of his allies; and, what none took into account, there was a controlling influence in England that, at that time, and for long afterwards, pressed him heavily.

"The English cabinet, although improvident in its preparations, was very fearful of misfortune, and the general durst not risk the safety of a single brigade, except for a great object, lest a slight disaster should cause the army

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

to be recalled. Thus he was obliged to curb his naturally enterprising disposition ; and to this burthen of ministerial incapacity, which he bore even to the battle of Salamanca, may be traced that over-caution which has been so often censured as a fault, not only by military writers, but by Napoleon, who, judging from appearances, erroneously supposed it to be a characteristic of the man, and often rebuked his generals for not taking advantage thereof.”*

The arrangement of attack, as settled by Sir Arthur Wellesley and Cuesta, was, that Victor should be assailed on front and flanks.† The front attack was to be entrusted to the Spanish general ; the right was to be assaulted by the British, who should cross the Teitar, and march on Oropesa ; while Venegas should operate to the southward of Madrid. Leaving Toledo on the left, he was to push forward to the Upper Tagus ; and should Sebastiani disregard his movements, he was to cross the river, and march direct upon the capital. On the opposite flank, Wilson's corps, reinforced by some Spanish battalions, was to threaten Madrid, and operate a diversion on that side.

In the mean time, the French armies, under the immediate direction of Joseph, had been put in motion ; and the despatch addressed to Lord Castlereagh from Plasencia, and dated the 15th of July, details their operations.

“ After I had written to your Lordship, on the 1st instant, King Joseph Buonaparte crossed the Tagus again, and joined Sebastiani with the troops he had brought from Madrid, and with a detachment from Marshal Victor's

• Napier.

† Sir Arthur was particularly anxious, that the passes of Banos and Perales should be occupied by a Spanish force of sufficient strength to secure them from any attempt the enemy might make to obtain possession of them. Cuesta, after much difficulty, acceded to the proposal of the English general, and promised that their defence should be provided for ; but he grossly deceived Sir Arthur Wellesley, and the loss of Banos afterwards exposed the British army to the risk of being cut off from Portugal.

corps, (making the corps of Sebastiani about 28,000 men,) with an intention of attacking Venegas's corps. Venegas, however, retired into the mountains of the Sierra Morena; and Colonel Lacy, with his advanced guard, attacked a French corps in the night, and destroyed many of them.

“ The French troops then again returned to the Tagus, which river King Joseph had crossed with the reinforcement which he had taken to Sebastiani's corps; and this last corps, amounting to 10,000 men only, was on the left bank of the Tagus, about Madridejos, in front of Venegas, who was again advancing. The last accounts from this quarter were of the 8th.

“ The French army under Victor, joined by the detachments brought by King Joseph from Sebastiani's corps, and amounting in the whole to about 35,000 men, are concentrated in the neighbourhood of Talavera and on the Alberche.

“ General Cuesta's army has been in the same position which I informed your Lordship that it had taken up when I addressed you on the 1st instant.

“ The advanced guard of the British army arrived here on the 8th; and the troops which were with me on the Tagus arrived by the 10th.

* * * *

“ I went to General Cuesta's quarters at Almaraz on the 10th, and stayed there till the 12th; and I have arranged with that general a plan of operations upon the French army, which we are to begin to carry into execution on the 18th, if the French should remain so long in their position.

“ The Spanish army under General Cuesta consists of about 33,000 men, (exclusive of Venegas's corps,) of which 7,000 are cavalry. About 14,000 men are detached to the bridge of Arzobispo, and the remainder are in the camp under the Puerto de Mirabete.

“The troops were ill clothed but well armed, and the officers appeared to take pains with their discipline. Some of the corps of infantry were certainly good, and the horses of the cavalry were in good condition.”*

* Wellington Despatches.



CHAPTER V.

DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING SUPPLIES—WELLESLEY CROSSES THE TEITAR—
VICTOR FALLS BACK UNHARMED—STRANGE AND SUSPICIOUS CONDUCT OF
CUESTA—OFFICIAL LETTER TO HIM—VICTOR RETIRES, AND CUESTA PASSES
THE ALBERCHE—IS DRIVEN BACK AND SAVED BY SHERBROOKE'S DIVISION
AND THE BRITISH CAVALRY—CUESTA'S OBSTINACY—ORDER OF BATTLE—
FRENCH ADVANCE TO THE ATTACK—DESPATCH TO LORD CASTLEREAGH.

THE exhausted state of Portugal could neither supply magazines nor means of transport, and Sir Arthur Wellesley made arrangements with the Spanish alcades in the fertile districts of the Alagon, the Arago, and the country around Ciudad Rodrigo, to furnish him with mules and provisions. Short as the march was from Castello Branco to Plasencia, it proved sufficiently that the Junta, the local authorities, and the British minister had all shamefully deceived him, and that their specious promises of supplies were not likely to be realized. The British general, disgusted with all concerned, apprized Mr. Frere and O'Donoju, the chief of Cuesta's staff, that he would not quit the Alberche, unless perfectly assured that means to support his army should be forthcoming when required; but that he would so far redeem his pledge to the Spanish commander, as to commence his march immediately towards that river.

Accordingly, on the 16th of July, a bridge was thrown

across the Teitar at Bazagona;* on the 17th, the infantry moved; on the 18th, crossed the Teitar, and had head quarters at Miajadas. On the 19th, the advanced guard was at Centinello, and on the 20th at Oropesa. On the 21st, the British army halted, and Cuesta, who had marched by Naval moral, and Arzobispo, passed through the town of Oropesa, and united his different corps at Velada.

Victor, well advised of the allied movements, strengthened his posts at Talavera, and despatched a regiment of light cavalry to support a movable column he had placed in observation of the Upper Alberche, at Escalona. On the 21st he changed his line of march from Madrid to the road of Toledo, removed his parc to Cevola, and united two divisions of infantry behind the Alberche. On the 22d the allies, in two columns, moved on Talavera, to dislodge the French posts; and Cuesta, who marched by the high road, overtook Victor's rear guard at Gamonal. On that occasion the old Spaniard gave ample proof of how little he was fitted for a command. Latour Maubourg, with a cavalry brigade, completely arrested the movement of the column, and obliged Zayas, who commanded it, to display his whole line, consisting of fifteen thousand infantry and three thousand dragoons; nor did the French horsemen give way at all, until the appearance of red uniforms on their right informed them that it was time to retire. Then, and not till then, Latour Maubourg, supported by some infantry, retreated behind the Alberche, and without loss, although many batteries, and at least six thousand Spanish horse, were close on his rear.† Early in the afternoon, the whole of the enemy were across the river, and the different corps in position, where they continued the whole of the 22d and 23d.

* Two companies of the staff corps, with a working party of five hundred men, were sent forward to carry a bridge across the stream. With the timber taken from an old house which they demolished, and some pine trees felled in a neighbouring forest, the task was effectually performed in *one day*, while Victor had lost *fifteen* in dragging pontoons over land from the Tagus.

† Napier.

Anxious to attack without delay, Sir Arthur Wellesley in vain sought the information he required, and which he might have expected to receive from the inhabitants of Talavera. Respecting the numbers and disposition of the enemy, they affected to be in total ignorance. The position, however, was viewed in reverse, from the mountains on the left bank of the Tagus, by some officers of Sir Arthur's staff.

That night the British general rode to the Spanish head quarters to arrange some unsettled details for the action of the morrow; but Cuesta was in bed, and his aid-de-camp refused to awake him. At three o'clock the English divisions were under arms—and at seven the Spanish staff were sound asleep. At last the old man was roused, and apprised that the British brigades had been "for four hours under arms, and ready to commence the attack," and Cuesta finally declined assisting, objecting to fight because the day was Sunday. Victor, in the mean time, remained quietly in a position he knew to be vulnerable in many points—and seemed so much at ease, as to warrant a strong suspicion that the communications between the allied generals had been treacherously disclosed; and in fact, Cuesta himself was at the time heavily suspected.

Still, in the hope that he might induce Cuesta to cooperate, Sir Arthur Wellesley, early on the 23d, forwarded the following communication to the head quarters of the Spanish general—but, as the result proved afterwards, the time for action had been suffered to escape.*

* "In the course of the 23d, the Spanish officer commanding the advanced posts reported that the French guns were withdrawn, and that it was evident they meant to retreat; Cuesta then became willing to attack, and proposed, in concert with Sir Arthur Wellesley, to examine Victor's position; but to the surprise of the English commander, the Spaniard arrived in a coach, drawn by six horses, to perform this duty; and when the inequalities of the ground obliged him to descend from his vehicle, he cast himself at the foot of a tree, and in a few moments went to sleep."—*Napier*.

“ Talavera de la Reyna, 23d July, 1809.

“ I have the honour to inform your Excellency that two divisions of British infantry, and one brigade of British cavalry, will cross the Alberche to-morrow morning, at four o'clock, and will proceed to the attack of the right of the enemy's position on the heights near Cazalegas. Two divisions of British infantry, and two brigades of British cavalry, will remain in reserve on the plain on the right of the Alberche, with their left on the wood near the Duque de Alva's palace, to act in support of the other British divisions, or otherwise, as circumstances may require.

“ I understand it to be settled by your Excellency, that a Spanish division of infantry and cavalry is to cross the Alberche in a central point, between the bridge and the wood in which the Duque de Alva's palace is situated, nearly at the time the British divisions will commence their attack upon the enemy's right; and that nearly at the same time another Spanish division of infantry and cavalry, and strongly supported by artillery, is to attack the bridge over the Alberche.

“ I also understand that your Excellency intends that a large division of infantry, and the great body of the Spanish cavalry, should be in reserve in the plain behind the Alberche.

“ Having been this evening on the left bank of the Tagus to examine the enemy's position on that side, I am of opinion that great facility will be given, and eventual success will attend, the attack of the bridge over the Alberche, if a battalion with four six-pounders were this night sent over the Tagus, with directions to the commanding officer to place himself, and use his artillery, first on the flank of the enemy's defences of the bridge; and secondly, as the Spanish troops will advance, on the left flank of his position on the heights.

“ I am of opinion that if the guns are unlimbered, and taken over by hand, there will be no difficulty in getting

them across the bridge over the Tagus, and that they can be at their station in the evening. If your Excellency wishes it, I will send an English officer with them to show where they ought to be stationed."*

Early on the 24th, however, it was discovered that Victor had retreated. Withdrawing his detached corps from Escalona, he left the Madrid road, and fell back on Torijos; and thus a glorious opportunity was lost,† while hourly the enemy were gathering strength. Soult was behind the Bejar mountains, concentrating fast; and Joseph Buonaparte multiplying troops rapidly between the British position and Toledo.

True to his expressed resolution, but confirmed as to the incapacity of his ally, Wellesley refused to listen to the old man's advice, to leave the Alberche and move forward; while Cuesta, because a French corps had retired, was under the strange delusion that Victor was in full retreat. In vain he urged the British general to advance, and turned a deaf ear to the assurances of Sir Arthur that the French were concentrating, and not actually running away. With characteristic arrogance, Cuesta maintained that his own opinions were correct, and singly "dashed forward in pursuit. His columns passed the Alberche in rapid succession,

* Wellington Despatches.

† "I find General Cuesta more and more impracticable every day. It is impossible to do business with him, and very uncertain that any operation will succeed in which he has any concern. O'Donju expresses himself to be heartily tired of him, and has declared that he will quit him at the first moment he is unsuccessful. He has quarrelled with some of his principal officers; and I understand that all are dissatisfied with him, for the manner in which he has conducted his operations near this place.

"He contrived to lose the whole of yesterday, in which, although his troops were under arms, and mine in march, we did nothing, owing to the whimsical perverseness of his disposition; but that omission I consider fortunate, as we have dislodged the enemy without a battle, in which the chances were not much in our favour. His want of communication with his officers of the plan settled with me for the 22d, and his absence from the field, were the cause that we did the French but little mischief on that day; and of these circumstances his officers are aware."—*Despatch to Mr. Frere—Talavera de la Reyna, 24th July, 1809.*

as if they were alone to be obstructed by the iron barrier of the Pyrenees. General Hill's division retraced its steps, occupying the same ground on which it had previously been encamped. The state of the campaign to an uninformed spectator appeared extraordinary. The army, previously acting in concert, was now separated, the least effective part being in pursuit of the enemy. Part of the British force had crossed the Alberche, and was ten miles in advance of Talavera, where they remained perfectly quiet, enjoying demi-starvation upon the banks of the Tagus.*

The consequences of Cuesta's stupid misconduct were easily foreseen; and the British commander, in his hour of need, saved a worthless ally. The British cavalry, with two infantry divisions, under General Sherbrooke, were sent over the Alberche, and established at Cazalega, where they could move either to the support of the Spanish general, or to assist the corps under Sir Robert Wilson, if that were found desirable. Indeed Sir Arthur's position, through the obstinacy of the Spaniard with whom he was associated, had now become most critical. Nearly within cannon-shot of Cuesta's advanced guard, fifty thousand French troops and ninety-five pieces of artillery were concentrated, while the English and Spanish armies were detached, and that, too, in a country like the valley of the Tagus, where the natural difficulties its numerous rivers presented, required that the closest and safest communications should be preserved.

Cuesta perceived, and nearly too late, that he had been "playing with a tiger;" and accordingly gave orders to retire on the 26th, which the French anticipated by crossing the Guadiana at day-break, and driving him from Torrijos to St. Olalla. Zayas formed, and offered battle; but, on the first appearance of the French column, the Spaniards broke and fled, followed closely by the cavalry of Latour Maubourg. Fortunately, Albuquerque, with three

* Leith Hay.

thousand Spanish cavalry, arrived at the moment, and checking the French advance, allowed Cuesta breathing-time to withdraw his broken columns to the Alberche.

The retreat of this useless army was remarkable; and the following pictorial, but faithful sketch, describes the reappearance of troops bent, two days before, directly on the capital, and whose advance, if boasting were to be believed, the Ebro would hardly limit.

“From amidst clouds of dust, disorderly chattering assemblages of half-clad, half-armed men, became occasionally visible; again regiments marching in perfect order; cavalry, staff-officers, bands of musicians, flocks of sheep, and bullocks; artillery-cars, carriages, and waggons, varied the animated, confused, and singular scene on which we gazed—forgetting for the time that all this was intimately connected with our very existence. The Spanish army, notwithstanding this confusion, had not the appearance of being pressed by the enemy in its retreat; nor did the scene we now witnessed differ much from that it would have presented under more favourable circumstances. The battalions marched in their best order; but with all this qualification, it was still a Spanish army—ill-commanded, ill-appointed, moderately disciplined, and, in most respects, inefficient.”*

On perceiving the confusion beyond the river, Sir Arthur Wellesley endeavoured to persuade Cuesta, “while Sherbrooke’s people could yet cover the movement, to withdraw to Talavera, where there was ground suited for defence. But Cuesta’s uncouth nature again broke forth; his people were beaten, dispirited, fatigued—bewildered; clustered on a narrow slip of low flat land, between the Alberche, the Tagus, and the heights of Salinas, and the first shot fired by the enemy must have been the signal of defeat; yet it was in vain that Sir Arthur Wellesley pointed out those things, and entreated of him to avoid the fall of the rock that trembled over his head.”†

* Leith Hay.

† Napier.

At last, when Victor's cavalry appeared, and the guards had received orders to retire, Cuesta gave a reluctant consent to take a position where he could be secure, and which, with the full consciousness of his worthlessness, the British general had selected as the only one in which he might be trusted.* In brutal imbecility, he remained obstinate to the last; and, thankless for a recent deliverance, boasted to his staff that, before he consented to save his useless mob† from ruin, "he had first made the Englishman," meaning Sir Arthur, "go down upon his knees!"‡

The country between Talavera and the Alberche is level,

* Sir Arthur Wellesley had, for some time, been examining, with an eagle's glance, the country about Talavera; and he suddenly selected ground, of which no one except himself had taken notice, but to the excellence of which future events bore ample testimony.

† "Like a rabble upon a pilgrimage"—such was Albuquerque's description,—"they proceeded without any regard to distance, order, or method; and with the whole park of artillery, they had neither provisions, staff, nor settled plan; and they stopped upon their marches to repose, like flocks of sheep, without taking up any position; so that, if the French had known the condition they were in, defeat must have been inevitable, whenever they were unexpectedly attacked."—*Southey*.

‡ At this period, it was not known that the Spanish armies in Aragon had sustained a terrible reverse. Blake, after the successful affair of Alcanitz, had recruited his army to nearly 22,000 men, and in the hope of cutting off a detachment under Faber, imprudently pushed on towards Zaragoza, and thus forced Suchet to a battle. On the 14th of June, both armies were skirmishing at Botorrita, and on the 15th came to action near the village of Maria, on the Huerba. The Spaniards were badly disposed, attacked, and beaten, with a loss of a general, twenty-five pieces of artillery, and several colours. On the 18th, at Belchite, both armies were again in presence of each other, the French numerically stronger; and the Spaniards, as might be expected, heavily defeated by their previous disaster.

Although the position Blake had taken on the 18th was infinitely stronger than that which he held at Maria, the resistance of the Spaniards was most wretched. His own account tells best the story of his defeat. "One regiment fled without firing a shot; it was followed by another, and a third, all flying without having discharged a gun; and in a few moments the whole position was abandoned." Blake lost the whole of his artillery, baggage, and ammunition: his army was dispersed, and a force, upon whom the Junta built half their hopes, was so completely ruined, that Aragon was placed at the foot of Napoleon, and reduced so low, that Mortier's corps was rendered disposable—an advantage that was not overlooked.

and interspersed with olive-grounds and thickets; while, in a parallel direction to the Tagus, and some two miles distance from the town, on the northern side, the plain terminates in a chain of steep round hillocks. A mountain-ridge, separated from these by a rugged valley, rises abruptly behind, and interposes between the waters of the Teitar and the Alberche.

Such are the general features of the adjacent country; and the town itself formed the point on which the British general fixed his position.

“Talavera stands on the northern bank of the Tagus, the houses reaching down to the water’s edge. The two armies were drawn up in line; the British on the left, extending from the town nearly to the Sierra de Gata, its extreme flank occupying a bold height near Alatuza de Segusella, having in its front a difficult ravine, and on its flank a deep valley. To the Spaniards the right was assigned. Their battalions were stationed among olive-groves, with walls and fences interspersed, and an embankment running along the road that formed an excellent breast-work, and rendered their position nearly unassailable.* It was necessary to secure the point of junction where the British right touched Cuesta’s left; and, to effect this, ten guns were placed in battery on the summit of a bold knoll, with an English division to protect them, and a strong cavalry corps in reserve.”†

The order of battle was continued from the Spanish left, by General Campbell’s division, formed in a double line. Sherbrooke’s, in single formation, was next upon the right. Mackenzie’s division, which was intended to form a second, and supporting line, being still in advance towards the

* The cavalry was posted behind the infantry; and the rear was supported by a large house in the wood, well placed, in case of defeat, to cover a retreat on the main roads leading from Talavera to Arzobispos and Oropesa. In this position they could not be attacked seriously, nor their disposition even seen; and thus one half of the line necessary to be occupied by the allies was rendered nearly impregnable, and yet held by the worst troops.—Napier.

† Victories of the British Army.





Alberche. Hill's division completed the whole, by taking post on the high grounds which here touched the valley; but, by some oversight, the ridge which crowned this chain of heights was not directly occupied. The whole line, thus displayed, was about two miles in length, "the left being covered by the valley between the hill and the mountain; and from this valley a ravine, or water-course, opened deeply in the front of the British left, but being gradually obliterated in the flat ground about the centre of the line. Part of the British cavalry was with General Mackenzie, and in the plain in front of the left, and part behind the great redoubt at the junction of the allied troops. The British and Germans under arms that day were somewhat above nineteen thousand sabres and bayonets, with thirty guns,"*—a force fearfully inferior,—for Joseph crossed the Alberche with fifty thousand men, and eighty pieces of artillery.†

Before day-break, on the 27th, the French army were under arms. At noon, the first corps reached the heights of Salinas, preceded by the cavalry under Latour Maubourg, and followed by the fourth corps, the guard, and the reserve. Although the dust betrayed the marching of the allied divisions as they moved to their respective positions, the wooded country, which stretched from the Tagus

* Napier.

† The French accounts of the battle of Talavera grossly exaggerated the strength of the allies. By a return extracted from the War Office report at Paris, the relative numbers of the French and allied troops stood thus:—

FRENCH.		Guns.	ALLIES.		Guns.
Royal Guards	5,000		British infantry, } (28½ battalions) }	16,663	30
<i>Victor's corps.</i>			Artil., engineers, &c.	1,287	
Infantry and artillery,	18,890	30	Cavalry	3,047	
Cavalry	3,781			20,997	
<i>Sebastiani's corps.</i>					
Infantry and artillery,	17,100	30			
Cavalry	3,670		Spanish infantry & artillery	33,000	70
<i>Reserve divisions.</i>			Cavalry	6,000	
Infantry and artillery,	7,681	20			
75 bat. 3 squad.]	56,122	80		59,997	100

to the heights, effectually concealed the movements of the English general. Victor, who was intimately acquainted with the localities, accurately pointed out the position of the allies, and recommended an immediate attack;—and, at three o'clock in the evening, the French columns advanced by the royal road, and that of Casa de Salinas, and the memorable battle of Talavera commenced.

The official account of this glorious action, if a succession of sanguinary combats can be thus termed, was transmitted to Lord Castlereagh by Sir Arthur Wellesley, in a despatch dated Talavera de la Reyna, 29th July, 1809.

“General Cuesta followed the enemy's march with his army from the Alberche, on the morning of the 24th, as far as Santa Olalla, and pushed forward his advanced guard as far as Torrijos. For the reasons stated to your Lordship in my despatch of the 24th, I moved only two divisions of infantry and a brigade of cavalry across the Alberche to Cazalegas, under the command of Lieut.-General Sherbrooke, with a view to keep up the communication between General Cuesta and me, and with Sir Robert Wilson's corps at Escalona.

“It appears that General Venegas had not carried into execution that part of the plan of operations which related to his corps, and that he was still at Daymiel, in La Mancha; and the enemy, in the course of the 24th, 25th, and 26th, collected all his forces in this part of Spain, between Torrijos and Toledo, leaving but a small corps of 2,000 men in that place.

“This united army thus consisted of the corps of Marshal Victor, of that of General Sebastiani, and of seven or eight thousand men, the guards of Joseph Buonaparte, and the garrison of Madrid; and it was commanded by Joseph Buonaparte, aided by Marshals Jourdan and Victor, and by General Sebastiani.

“On the 26th, General Cuesta's advanced guard was attacked near Torrijos, and obliged to fall back; and the

general retired with his army on that day to the left bank of the Alberche, General Sherbrooke continuing at Cazalegas, and the enemy at Santa Olalla.

“ It was then obvious that the enemy intended to try the result of a general action, for which the best position appeared to be in the neighbourhood of Talavera; and General Cuesta having consented to take up this position on the morning of the 27th, I ordered General Sherbrooke to retire with his corps to its station in the line, leaving General Mackenzie with a division of infantry and a brigade of cavalry as an advanced post in the wood, on the right of the Alberche, which covered our left flank.

“ The position taken up by the troops at Talavera extended rather more than two miles: the ground was open upon the left, where the British army was stationed, and it was commanded by a height, on which was placed *en échelon*, as the second line, a division of infantry under the orders of Major-General Hill.

“ There was a valley between the height, and a range of mountains still farther upon the left, which valley was not at first occupied, as it was commanded by the height before mentioned; and the range of mountains appeared too distant to have any influence on the expected action.

“ The right, consisting of Spanish troops, extended immediately in front of the town of Talavera, down to the Tagus. This part of the ground was covered by olive-trees, and much intersected by banks and ditches. The high road, leading from the bridge over the Alberche, was defended by a heavy battery in front of a church, which was occupied by Spanish infantry.

“ All the avenues of the town were defended in a similar manner. The town was occupied, and the remainder of the Spanish infantry was formed in two lines behind the banks on the road which led from the town, and the right to the left of our position.

“ In the centre, between the two armies, there was a commanding spot of ground; on which we had commenced

to construct a redoubt, with some open ground in its rear. Brig.-General Alexander Campbell was posted at this spot with a division of infantry, supported in its rear by General Cotton's brigade of dragoons, and some Spanish cavalry.

" At about two o'clock on the 27th, the enemy appeared in strength on the left bank of the Alberche, and manifested an intention to attack General Mackenzie's division. The attack was made before they could be withdrawn; but the troops, consisting of General Mackenzie's and Colonel Donkin's brigades, and General Anson's brigade of cavalry, and supported by General Payne with the other four regiments of cavalry in the plain between Talavera and the wood, withdrew in good order, but with some loss, particularly by the second battalion 87th regiment, and the second battalion 31st regiment, in the wood.

" Upon this occasion, the steadiness and discipline of the 45th regiment, and the fifth battalion 60th regiment, were conspicuous; and I had particular reason for being satisfied with the manner in which Major-General Mackenzie withdrew this advanced guard.

" As the day advanced, the enemy appeared in larger numbers on the right of the Alberche, and it was obvious that he was advancing to a general attack upon the combined armies. General Mackenzie continued to fall back gradually upon the left position of the combined armies, where he was placed in the second line in the rear of the guards, Colonel Donkin being placed in the same situation farther upon the left, in the rear of the King's German Legion.

" The enemy immediately commenced his attack, in the dusk of the evening, by a cannonade upon the left of our position, and by an attempt with his cavalry to overthrow the Spanish infantry, posted, as I have before stated, on the right. This attempt entirely failed.

" Early in the night, he pushed a division along the valley on the left of the height occupied by General Hill, of which he gained a momentary possession; but Major-

General Hill attacked it instantly with the bayonet, and regained it. This attack was repeated in the night, but failed; and again, at day-light on the morning of the 28th, by two divisions of infantry, and was repulsed by Major-General Hill.

“ Major-General Hill has reported to me, in a particular manner, the conduct of the 29th regiment, and of the first battalion 48th regiment, in these different affairs, as well as that of Major-General Tilson and Brig.-General R. Stuart.

“ We lost many brave officers and soldiers in the defence of this important point in our position; among others, I cannot avoid mentioning Brigade-Major Fordyce and Brigade-Major Gardner; and Major-General Hill was himself wounded, but I am happy to say but slightly.

“ The defeat of this attempt was followed about noon by a general attack with the enemy's whole force upon the whole of that part of the position occupied by the British army.

“ In consequence of the repeated attempts upon the height upon our left, by the valley, I had placed two brigades of British cavalry in that valley, supported in the rear by the Duque de Albuquerque's division of Spanish cavalry.

“ The enemy then placed light infantry in the range of mountains on the left of the valley, which were opposed by a division of Spanish infantry under Lieut.-General Bassecourt.

“ The general attack began by the march of several columns of infantry into the valley, with a view to attack the height occupied by Major-General Hill. These columns were immediately charged by the 1st German hussars and 23d light dragoons, under Brig.-General Anson, directed by Lieut.-General Payne, and supported by Brig.-General Fayne's brigade of heavy cavalry; and although the 23d dragoons suffered considerable loss, the charge had the effect of preventing the execution of that part of the enemy's plan.

“ At the same time he directed an attack upon Brig.-General Alexander Campbell's position in the centre of the combined armies, and on the right of the British. This attack was most successfully repulsed by Brig.-General Campbell, supported by the king's regiment of Spanish cavalry and two battalions of Spanish infantry, and Brig.-General Campbell took the enemy's cannon.

“ The Brig.-General mentions particularly the conduct of the 97th, the second battalion 7th, and of the second battalion of the 53d regiment; and I was highly satisfied with the manner in which this part of the position was defended.

“ An attack was also made at the same time upon Lieut.-General Sherbrooke's division, which was in the left and centre of the first line of the British army. This attack was most gallantly repulsed by a charge with bayonets by the whole division; but the brigade of guards, which were on the right, having advanced too far, they were exposed on their left flank to the fire of the enemy's batteries, and of their retiring columns, and the division was obliged to retire towards the original position, under cover of the second line of General Cotton's brigade of cavalry, which I moved from the centre, and of the first battalion 48th regiment. I had moved this last regiment from its position on the height as soon as I observed the advance of the guards, and it was formed in the plain, and advanced upon the enemy, and covered the formation of Lieut.-General Sherbrooke's division.

“ Shortly after the repulse of this general attack, in which apparently all the enemy's troops were employed, he commenced his retreat across the Alberche, which was conducted in the most regular order, and was effected during the night, leaving in our hands twenty pieces of cannon, ammunition, tumbrils, and some prisoners.

“ Your Lordship will observe, by the enclosed return, the great loss which we have sustained of valuable officers and soldiers in this long and hard-fought action with more than double our numbers. That of the enemy has been

much greater. I have been informed that entire brigades of infantry have been destroyed; and indeed the battalions which retreated were much reduced in numbers.

“ I have particularly to lament the loss of Major-General Mackenzie, who had distinguished himself on the 27th, and of Brig.-General Langwerth, of the King’s German Legion, and of Brigade-Major Beckett, of the guards.

“ Your Lordship will observe that the attacks of the enemy were principally, if not entirely, directed against the British troops. The Spanish commander-in-chief, his officers and troops, manifested every disposition to render us assistance; and those of them who were engaged did their duty; but the ground which they occupied was so important, and its front at the same time so difficult, that I did not think it proper to urge them to make any movement on the left of the enemy while he was engaged with us.”*

* Wellington Despatches.



CHAPTER VI.

OPENING OF THE ACTION—SPANIARDS RUN AWAY—NIGHT ATTACK—THE 29TH REGIMENT—BATTLE RENEWED—INTERESTING INCIDENT—ATTACK UPON THE BRITISH CENTRE—CHARGE OF THE 23D LIGHT DRAGOONS—THE GUARDS ATTACKED—THE 48TH REGIMENT—LOSSES OF THE BRITISH AND FRENCH—ARTILLERY CAPTURED—THE BRITISH BIVOUAC ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

No peninsular triumph brings with it more glorious reminiscences than the hard-fought field of Talavera. The conqueror of that day won afterwards more brilliant and more important victories; but he never fought a battle, where he was more vigorously pressed, or so perseveringly assailed. At Talavera, Wellesley had a double duty to perform. He had to provide for the safety of an intractable old man, and dispose an inferior force, on which only reliance could be placed, in a position where they could bear the brunt of the whole battle, and withstand the furious efforts of a veteran army, in every arm thrice their strength.

The contest opened under unfavourable auspices; for by the first movement of the French, Sir Arthur Wellesley was nearly made a prisoner. The divisions of Lapisse and Ruffin crossed the Alberche, and advanced so rapidly on the Casa de Salinas, that the English general, who was at the

moment in the house, had scarcely time allowed to enable him to mount and ride off.*

This was the most decisive advantage the French gained. By some unaccountable inattention, no pickets were in front, and the French columns were immediately upon the British brigades, before the latter were apprized that the enemy were advancing. Two young battalions—both Irish,† and both afterwards remarkable where all were brave, for their daring in attack and their indifference under fire—got into confusion, and were forced back in some disorder. The 45th and part of the 60th checked the enemy's advance, and Wellesley, in person, directed the retreat of the infantry. In safety they reached the position, covered by the cavalry—Mackenzie taking his ground behind the guards—Donkin forming on the high ground to the left that had not as yet been occupied, while the cavalry drew up in column in the rear.

At this period, the battle was seriously endangered—Cuesta, from the strength of his position, might have been considered safe enough; but, as it appeared, no local advantages could secure his wretched troops, or render them trustworthy for an hour. While Victor, “animated by the success of his first operation, followed Donkin with Villatte's division and the whole of his light cavalry and guns; the fourth corps and French reserve, which were directed against the right, sent their cavalry forward to induce the Spaniards to unmask their line of battle.—“The French horsemen rode boldly up to the front, and commenced skirmishing with their pistols, and the Spaniards answered them with a general discharge of small arms; but then, ten thousand infantry, and all the artillery, breaking their ranks, fled to the rear: the artillery-men carried off their horses; the infantry threw away their

* “Sir Arthur had another narrow escape the preceding day: while he was reconnoitering, a three-pound shot was fired at him with so good an aim, that it cut a bough from a tree close to his head.”—*Southey*.

† The 87th and 88th regiments.

arms, and the adjutant-general O'Donogue was amongst the foremost of the fugitives. Nay, Cuesta himself was in movement towards the rear. The panic spread, and the French would fain have charged; but Sir Arthur Wellesley, who was at hand, immediately flanked the main road with some English squadrons: the ditches on the other side rendered the country impracticable; and the fire of musketry being renewed by those Spaniards who remained, the enemy lost some men, and finally retreated in disorder."*

The confusion occasioned in the rear by this panic is indescribable: cattle, baggage, and stores, were in all directions hurried off; while the runaways spread over the whole country, reporting that the English were cut to pieces, and the French cavalry already at their heels. During the night a large proportion of the fugitives were overtaken by their own horsemen, and driven back at the sword's point to the position they had abandoned; but fully six thousand of Cuesta's troops could not be recovered, and were returned as missing in the morning.

Night had now set in, and, encouraged by the singular confusion among the Spaniards on the right, and perceiving that the apex of the ridge upon the left was unoccupied, Victor determined, by a sudden assault, to carry what he justly considered to be the key of the English position. Ruffin was instantly ordered forward with his division, supported by Villatte's; while Lapisse, by a false attack upon the Germans, was intended to effect a diversion. The attack was furiously made, and, at first, gallantly repelled by Donkin's brigade—but superior numbers succeeded; the English left was turned, and the ridge behind it crowned by the enemy. General Hill, who had advanced to Donkin's assistance with the 48th regiment, in the twilight mistook the French for British stragglers, and rode hastily

* Napier.

into their ranks.* His brigade-major† was shot dead, and his own horse seized by a grenadier. The general, however, shook him off, galloped down the hill, placed himself at the head of the 29th, led them up the heights, and gallantly restored the battle.

“The regiment was formed in column of companies, at quarter distance. The 48th and battalion of detachments met with a formidable resistance, and were driven back at this critical moment, upon which the safety of the army depended. The 29th was ordered to advance at double quick time. The leading company crowned the summit previously to receiving the enemy’s fire. A considerable body of French were now in possession of the height. Their numbers rapidly increasing, the drums beat the *pas de charge*; while at intervals voices were heard, some calling out they were the German legion, others not to fire. It was so dark that the blaze of musketry alone displayed the forms of the assailants. The leading company of the 29th poured in a volley when close to the bayonets of the enemy. The glorious cheer of the British infantry accompanied the charge, which succeeded. The rest of the regiment arrived in quick succession, forming on the summit a close column, which speedily drove every thing before it. The enemy was pursued down the hill, abandoning the level ground on its top, thickly strewn with dead bodies or wounded men. No second attempt was for some time made to carry this most important point, and the 29th remained in possession of the ground, lying on their arms in the midst of fallen enemies.”

The contest ended for that night. Two thousand gal-

* “Whole battalions of the enemy got into the English line, some crying that they were Spaniards, some that they were German deserters; the trick was soon discovered, and in the reception which they met with, it is not unlikely that many a poor German, who really intended to desert, lost his life. These night-engagements were carried on with the most determined fury; the men, after they had discharged their muskets, frequently closed, and fought with the butt-end.”—*Southey*.

† Fordyce.

lant soldiers were already slain, and not an inch of ground was yet won by the assailants. Both sides, tired of slaughter, wished naturally for a short term of repose; fires were lighted along the lines, and a temporary quiet reigned in the bivouacs of the wearied soldiery. But any interval of repose was fated to be brief.

“About midnight this silence was suddenly interrupted by firing, towards Talavera; not the straggling, desultory, yet distinct reports of light troops, but a roll of musketry that illuminated the whole extent of the Spanish line. It was one discharge; but of such a nature, that I* have never heard it equalled. It appeared not to be returned, nor was it repeated. All again became silent. A false alarm had occasioned this tremendous volley; but we were too distant to ascertain what had produced the violent irruption, or how many of our allies had thrown away their arms and fled, after having delivered a fire sufficiently formidable to have shaken the best and bravest troops.”†

The failure of Ruffin against the heights discouraged Joseph Buonaparte, and he consulted with Jourdan and Victor how far it would be prudent to renew the action in the morning. The generals differed in opinion: Jourdan advised that a position should be taken on the Alberche, and that the effect of Soult's operations upon the British rear should be awaited; while Victor was anxious that the attack should be renewed at day-break, engaging, if supported by the fourth corps, to carry the hill from which he had been so desperately repulsed already. While Joseph, embarrassed by these conflicting opinions, was still in uncertainty by which he should be guided, a despatch from Soult, announcing that he could not reach Plasencia before

* Leith Hay.

† “Sir Arthur, who was near the spot, observed that the fire was admirably well kept up, and hoped they would do as well next day; but as he suspected that at that moment there was nothing to fire at, he wished to stop it. While he was speaking, three battalions of Spaniards, alarmed at their own noise, gave way, and fairly took to their heels.”—*Southey*.

the 3d and 5th of August, confirmed him in a resolution to follow Victor's counsel and risk another battle. The necessary arrangements were accordingly made, and soon after day-break a general movement of the enemy "gave note of preparation." Two heavy columns of chosen troops, the grenadiers of Lapisse's division, were formed in front of the height in question. "The formation was marked by a furious cannonade, under cover of which the columns pressed forward; and desperate and numerous were the efforts which they made to render themselves masters of the summit; but nothing could exceed the gallantry and steadiness of the brave men who opposed them. The brigades of General Tilson and R. Stewart were here; they permitted the enemy again and again to arrive within a few paces of the ridge, and they drove them back in admirable style with the bayonet, till disheartened by so many repulses, they at last retreated altogether, leaving the ground covered with their dead."*

The fighting had lasted without intermission from five in the morning. The slaughter on both sides had been immense, and the heat became intolerable. By a sort of tacit understanding the struggle ceased on both sides about nine o'clock, each availing themselves of the brief repose which both so much required. The French appeared dispirited; for three hours not a movement was made, nor a musket was discharged; "and it was a question with us whether we should advance, and in our turn become the assailants, or remain quietly where we were, and await the result of the enemy's deliberations."†

During this cessation of hostilities, an incident of rare occurrence in war produced an interesting display of generous feeling between two brave and noble-minded enemies. "A small stream, tributary to the Tagus, flowed through a part of the battle-ground, and separated the combatants. During the pause that the heat of the weather and the

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

† Ibid.

weariness of the troops had produced, both armies went to the banks of the rivulet for water. The men approached each other fearlessly, threw down their caps and muskets, chatted to each other like old acquaintances, and exchanged their canteens and wine-flasks. All asperity of feeling seemed forgotten. To a stranger, they would have appeared more like an allied force, than men hot from a ferocious conflict, and only gathering strength and energy to recommence it anew. But a still nobler rivalry for the time existed; the interval was employed in carrying off the wounded, who lay intermixed upon the hard-contested field; and, to the honour of both be it told, that each endeavoured to extricate the common sufferers, and remove their unfortunate friends and enemies, without distinction. Suddenly, the bugles sounded, the drums beat to arms; many of the rival soldiery shook hands, and parted with expressions of mutual esteem, and in ten minutes after they were again at the bayonet's point.*

The assault of the fourth corps on the British centre was as furious and disastrous as that of Ruffin's. Sebastiani's attack was boldly made, and the French came on with an assured courage that seemed resolved to sweep away every obstacle that opposed it. Covered by a cloud of light troops, the columns passed the broken ground with imposing determination, only to encounter opponents still more determined than themselves.† “The English regiments,

* The Bivouac.

† “The Spanish camp was full of confusion and distrust. Cuesta inspired terror, but no confidence; and Albuquerque, whether from conviction or instigated by momentary anger, just as the French were coming on to the final attack, sent one of his staff to inform the English commander that Cuesta was betraying him. The aide-de-camp charged with this message delivered it to Colonel Donkin, and that officer carried it to Sir Arthur Wellesley. The latter, seated on the summit of the hill which had been so gallantly contested, was intently watching the movements of the advancing enemy, listened to this somewhat startling message without so much as turning his head, and then drily answered—‘*Very well, you may return to your brigade,*’ continued his survey of the French. Donkin retired, filled with admiration of the imperturbable resolution and quick penetration of the man.”—*Napier*.

putting the French skirmishers aside, met the advancing columns with loud shouts, and, breaking in on their front, and lapping their flanks with fire, gave them no respite, and pushed them back with a terrible carnage. Ten guns were taken; but, as General Campbell prudently forbore pursuit, the French rallied on their supports, and made a show of attacking again. Vain attempt! The British artillery and musketry played furiously upon their masses, and a Spanish regiment of cavalry charging on their flank at the same time, the whole retired in disorder, and the victory was secured in that quarter.

As victory is ever damped by individual suffering, an event well calculated to increase the horrors of a battle-field occurred, that cannot be recollected without the liveliest sorrow for those who suffered.

“ From the heat of the weather, the fallen leaves were parched like tinder, and the grass was rank and dry. Near the end of the engagement, both were ignited by the blaze of some cartridge-papers, and the whole surface of the ground was presently covered with a sheet of fire. Those of the disabled who lay on the outskirts of the field managed to crawl away, or were carried off by their more fortunate companions who had escaped unhurt; but, unhappily, many gallant sufferers, with ‘medicable wounds,’ perished in the flames before it was possible to extricate them.”*

The most daring, and the most disastrous effort of the day remains to be narrated. The French, still intent upon seizing the left of the position, moved up the valley in force; and Anson’s light brigade of cavalry was ordered to charge the columns as they came forward. The ground was treacherous—flat, apparently to the eye, while a dangerous and narrow ravine secured the French infantry completely. The word was given; the brigade advanced at a steady canter; a plain was, as they believed, before them, and in full blood, what should check their career? Colonel Elley,

* Victories of the British Armies.

who was some lengths in advance of the 23d, was the first who discovered the obstacle in their road, and vainly endeavoured to check the charge, and apprise his companions of the dangerous ground they had to pass; "but, advancing with such velocity, the line was on the verge of the stream before his signs could be either understood or attended to. Under any circumstances this must have been a serious occurrence in a cavalry charge; but when it is considered that four or five hundred dragoons were assailing two divisions of infantry, unbroken, and fully prepared for the onset, to have persevered at all, was highly honourable to the regiment.

"At this moment the enemy, formed in squares, opened his tremendous fire. A change immediately took place. Horses rolled on the earth; others were seen flying back, dragging their unhorsed riders with them. The German hussars pulled up; but although the line of the 23d was broken, still that regiment galloped forward. The confusion was increased; but no hesitation took place in the individuals of this gallant corps. The survivors rushed on with, if possible, accelerated pace, passing between the flank of the square, now one general blaze of fire, and the building on its left."

It was strange that, under such circumstances, men should think of any thing but securing a retreat. The Germans, on arriving at the brink of the ravine, had reined sharply up; and though they suffered heavily from the French musketry, galloped out of fire, and re-formed behind Bassecourt's Spanish division, which was in observation in the rear. Struggling through the water-course, the survivors of the 23d, as they gained the bank in two's and three's, formed, and passing the French infantry at speed, "fell with inexpressible fury on a brigade of chasseurs in the rear." A momentary success attended this reckless display of valour; but a body of Polish lancers and Westphalian light-horse came up, and to resist such odds were hopeless.

“ The situation of the 23d was now very critical. To return directly from whence the regiment had advanced, was impracticable. By doing so, the surviving soldiers must have again sustained a close and deadly fire from the French squares; and although the chasseurs had given way, another line of cavalry was in their front. To their right was the whole French army; to their left, and in rear of the enemy’s infantry, was the only possible line of escape. This was adopted. In small parties, or singly, they again regained the valley, re-forming in rear of General Fane’s brigade, the advance of which had been countermanded after the unsuccessful result of the first charge was ascertained.”*

A furious attack made upon Sherbrooke’s division, was among the most gallant efforts of the day. Under a storm of artillery, the French columns fairly came forward, as if they intended to leave the issue to “ cold iron;” but they never crossed a bayonet, were charged in turn, and repelled with serious loss.

“ Who has ever seen an unbroken line preserved in following up a successful bayonet charge?” The guards, carried forward by victorious excitement, advanced too far, and found themselves assailed by the French reserve,† and mowed down by an overwhelming fire. “ They fell back; but as whole sections were swept away, their ranks became disordered, and nothing but their stubborn gallantry prevented a total *déroute*. Their situation was most critical—had the French cavalry charged home, nothing could have saved them. Lord Wellington saw the danger, and speedily despatched support. A brigade of horse was ordered up, and our regiment‡ moved from the heights we occupied to assist our hard-pressed comrades.

* Sherer.

† “ The enemy instantly rallied, followed them, and were so confident of victory, that their officer was heard to exclaim, ‘ *Allons, mes enfans, ils sont tout mes prisonniers.*’ ”

‡ The 48th.

We came on at double-quick, and formed in the rear by companies, and through the intervals in our line the broken ranks of the guards retreated. A close and well-directed volley from us arrested the progress of the victorious French, while, with amazing celerity and coolness, the guards rallied and re-formed, and in a few minutes advanced in turn to support us. As they came on, the men gave a loud huzza. An Irish regiment to the right answered it with a thrilling cheer. It was taken up from regiment to regiment, and passed along the English line; and that wild shout told the advancing enemy that British valour was indomitable. The leading files of the French halted—turned—fell back—and never made another effort.”*

It may be readily imagined that the loss entailed upon both armies, by a sanguinary and protracted struggle like that of Talavera, must be enormous. On the British side, Generals Mackenzie and Langworth fell; and the entire casualties amounted to 5,423.† The French loss was infinitely greater. According to the returns of Jourdan and Semele, they had two general officers and 944 killed,

* The Bivouac.

† Return of the numbers of killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of Lieut.-General the Hon. Sir Arthur Wellesley, K.B., in action with the French army, commanded by King Joseph Buonaparte in person, at Talavera de la Reyna, on the 27th and 28th of July, 1809.

	Officers.	Serjants.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	40	28	789	211	857
Wounded . . .	195	165	3553	71	3918
Missing	9	15	629	159	653
Total	244	208	4971	441	5423

6,294 wounded, and 156 made prisoners—being, in all 7,389. But English and Spanish writers assert that their casualties were much greater, and return the total loss at fully 10,000 men.

“ The battle ended at about six o’clock, and after that hour scarcely a shot was heard. Both armies occupied the positions of the morning, and the British bivouacked on the field, with little food, and no shelter; while the dead lay silently around, and the moans of the wounded broke sadly on the ear, as they were conveyed all through the night to the hospitals in Salamanca.”*

The total failure of Lapisse’s attack, who was mortally wounded in leading his division on, after it had been shattered and disordered by the closely-delivered volleys of the English regiments, was the signal for a general retreat. The French, covered by a tremendous fire of artillery, retired to their own position, leaving seventeen guns in the possession of the victors. The marvel is that any trophy could be won. The English, worn out by fatigue, and literally starving—with now scarcely fourteen thousand men embattled—were incapable of farther exertion; while their useless allies, though fresh and undamaged, dared not be employed, as they were not even to be trusted when behind banks and breastworks, and were utterly unequal to attempt the simplest evolutions.

A damp cold night succeeded a burning day. Without food, covering, or even water, the British bivouacs were cheerless enough; but, except from wounded men, not a murmur was heard—not a complaint escaped. When morning broke, the English brigades—“ feeble and few, but fearless still”—rose at the first tap of the drum, and once more stood gallantly to their arms.

* Victories of the British Armies.

CHAPTER VII.

FRENCH TAKE A POSITION ON THE HEIGHTS OF SALINAS—LIGHT BRIGADE ARRIVE UPON THE BATTLE GROUND AFTER AN EXTRAORDINARY MARCH—SOULT CARRIES THE PASS OF BANOS—CUESTA ABANDONS TALAVERA, AND FOLLOWS THE ENGLISH ARMY—SOULT CROSSES THE TEITAR, AND WELLESLEY RETREATS OVER THE BRIDGE OF ARZOBISPO—LETTER TO MR. FRERE—SPANIARDS DEFEATED AT ARZOBISPO—WELLESLEY TAKES A POSITION AT JARAICEJO, CUESTA AT DELEYTOZA, AND BERESFORD ON THE AGUEDA—SPANISH INGRATITUDE TOWARDS THE ALLIES—SOULT PROPOSES TO CROSS THE FRONTIER, AND NEY REFUSES—FRENCH ARMY CONSEQUENTLY BREAK UP—AFFAIR AT BANOS—WELLESLEY APPOINTED A SPANISH CAMP MARSHAL—MR. FRERE RECALLED—CUESTA SUPERSEDED—WELLESLEY HALTS AT MERIDA—DETERMINES TO TAKE UP THE LINE OF THE GUADIANA—VICTOR ENTERS TALAVERA—HUMANITY TOWARDS THE BRITISH SICK AND WOUNDED—PLUNDERS THE TOWN—SICKNESS IN THE BRITISH ARMY—HEAD QUARTERS REMOVED TO BADAJOZ.

AT day-break on the 29th, the French army was discovered formed upon the heights of Salinas, having crossed the Alberche during the night. Relieved from all apprehension of a renewed attack, the removal of his wounded to Talavera, where he was endeavouring to establish hospitals for their reception, engrossed the attention of Sir Arthur Wellesley; and although it was afterwards ascertained that a month's provisions were secreted in the town, it required his greatest exertions to obtain a bare sufficiency to keep his troops from starving, while the wounded were sinking fast, not from the severity of their injuries, but from the actual want of common nourishment. The brutality of Cuesta's character evidenced itself in his conduct towards the ally who had preserved him. He not only refused assistance to the wounded, but declined even to aid in the burial of the dead. Intent upon an occupation more

german to his ferocious disposition, instead of endeavouring to improve the advantages of a victory that had been won for him, Cuesta occupied himself in decimating the regiments who had been panic-stricken on the 27th; but influenced by the strong remonstrances of the British general, he relaxed his severity so far, as to re-decimate the unfortunate wretches upon whom the lot of death had fallen, and only six officers and forty men were slaughtered. Had not "his cruelty been mitigated by the earnest intercession of Sir Arthur Wellesley, more men would have been destroyed in cold blood, by this savage old man, than had fallen in the battle."*

On the day after the engagement, a welcome reinforcement joined the English army. By an unparalleled exertion, the light brigade, consisting of the 43d, 52d, and 95th (Rifles) arrived on the 29th upon the battle ground, and immediately took outpost duty. The regiments, after a march of twenty miles, were bivouacked for the night, when intelligence reached their commanding officer, that Sir Arthur Wellesley was on the eve of a battle. After a short halt, the brigade got under arms with a fixed determination to share the glory of the coming field. As they advanced, Spanish fugitives, hurrying off in crowds, informed them that the struggle was already ended, that the English army was totally defeated, and Sir Arthur Wellesley killed. "Indignant at this shameful scene, the troops hastened, rather than slackened, the impetuosity of their pace;"† and leaving only seventeen stragglers behind, in twenty-six hours they accomplished a march of sixty-two English miles. To estimate this extraordinary effort made by these splendid regiments, it should be recollected that it was executed in heavy marching order, over a country where water was scarce, and beneath a burning sun. As a march, none on military record has exceeded it.‡

* Napier. † Ibid.

‡ "Aware that the armies were in presence of each other, and apprized that a battle was inevitable, an ardent wish to share the glory of the field, stimu-

Never did a general, after the achievement of a glorious victory, so speedily find himself environed by difficulties, and these accumulating with alarming celerity. On the 30th, Wellesley was apprized that Soult was moving towards the pass of Banos; and aware how important its possession was for the mutual security of Cuesta and himself, he importuned that obstinate old man to detach a Spanish corps without delay, to strengthen its feeble garrison. Cuesta refused, wavered, procrastinated, and consented;* and when the French were known to have been on the 1st of August within one day's march of the pass, then, and then only, the Spanish general detached Bassecourt to its relief, he being four marches distant. The consequences may be anticipated. Soult obtained possession of Banos without expending a cartridge, reached Plasencia, where he obtained artillery and stores from Madrid, and was now at the head of fifteen thousand veteran soldiers, recovered from their late fatigues, and in their equipment perfect in every arm.

On receiving this alarming intelligence, Wellesley proposed to march with the British army against Soult, leaving Cuesta at Talavera, to secure his rear and protect his hospitals; and to this arrangement the Spanish general gave

lated these soldiers to exertions that hunger, fatigue, and thirst could not abate; and though efforts almost beyond belief, failed to bring them to the battle-ground before the struggle terminated; the rapidity of their march, and the fine condition in which they joined the army, justly obtained for them the admiration of the victors of Talavera."—*Victories of the British Armies.*

* "I had at last prevailed upon the general to detach a sufficient corps to defend the Puerto, which marched yesterday morning; but after the evil was done, he became equally sensible with myself of the important advantage which had been gained by the enemy, and he came to me to propose that half of the army should march immediately to set the matter right again. I told him that if by half of the army he meant half of the Spanish and English corps, I could not consent to the proposal, and that I would either stay or go with my whole corps. He then desired that I would choose, and I offered to go.

"My reason for this preference is, that I think that I shall effect the operation, probably without contest, in a shorter time than he could, and with much more certainty; and that I can bring to bear upon this point, not only all the Spanish troops in the neighbourhood, but the Portuguese army, which are collected not far from Ciudad Rodrigo."—*Despatch, Oropesa, 3d August, 1809.*

his consent. The army was accordingly moved on the 3d to Oropesa—but extracts from despatches forwarded by Cuesta to Sir Arthur reached him there. They had been found upon a friar, and were addressed to Soult from Joseph Buonaparte and Jourdan. In these the marshal was urged to press on without delay, and assured of the cooperation of Ney from Castile, while Joseph himself would immediately assume the offensive. Venegas, instead of marching upon Puente-Duena and Arganda, had diverged towards Toledo and Aranjuez, enabling the enemy by this false movement to keep both Spanish corps in check; and in conclusion, Cuesta intimated his immediate intention of marching on Oropesa, and of course abandoning Talavera, and the wounded left there under his protection. This, indeed, was mortifying news. His breach of faith was bad enough, but his inhumanity was still more intolerable. Although he was encumbered with cars and waggons, “he refused to spare us more than seven for the transportation of the brave men who had fought and bled for his country. The abandonment of the town was, as may be imagined, a most heart-rending scene. Such of our poor soldiers as were in a condition to move at all, crawled after us, some still bleeding, and many more with their wounds open and undressed; whilst those whose hurts were too severe to permit of this, lay upon their pallets, and implored their comrades not to desert them. By indefatigable exertions, and by sacrificing a great quantity of baggage, Sir Arthur Wellesley got together forty cars, which enabled us to bring forward in all about two thousand men; but there were still some hundreds left behind, all of whom, had Cuesta acted with humanity or honour, might have been preserved.”*

No remonstrances of the British general could change Cuesta's determination. During the night of the 3d his disorderly soldiery “came pouring in like a flock of sheep,” adding fresh embarrassments to those under which Sir

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

Arthur Wellesley already laboured.* Soult was also across the Teitar, and his advanced guard at Naval Moral. Hence the bridge of Almaraz was either already in possession of the enemy, or it had been destroyed by the Spanish partisans, and the alternative left the English general was, either to cut his way through Soult's corps, or march direct back on Arzobispo, and take the line of the Tagus. On the latter course Wellesley determined.

When Cuesta arrived next morning, and Sir Arthur's decision was conveyed to him, he objected to any retreat, and, as usual, was anxious for a pitched battle. Arguments were lost in endeavouring to show the impolicy, under existing circumstances, of risking an action, and the English general closed the conference by assuring him, that however he might employ the Spanish troops, the British should not be unnecessarily endangered. Orders to march were instantly given, and the English rear-guard cleared the bridge, as the enemy's patrols began to show themselves.

Sir Arthur apprized Mr. Frere of his having retired to Arzobispo, and detailed his reasons for adopting that step. After enumerating the many unfavourable events which had occurred since he had written his preceding despatch, he states the serious alteration in his plans and prospects, which the abandonment of Talavera by Cuesta had occasioned. "Thus," he says, "my security was gone, and nearly fifteen hundred of my wounded soldiers were left behind. It then became a subject of serious consideration what I should recommend to the general to do. We could not regain the ground of the bridge of Almaraz without a battle, and, in all probability, we should have had to fight another with fifty thousand men, before the bridge could be

* "The evil was aggravated by the junction of two large armies, in a country which had scarcely ever been without troops to exhaust it during the preceding twelve months. When the two combined armies became competitors for food, the inhabitants naturally preferred their own countrymen. It was afterwards discovered also, that, with a stupid selfishness, which admits neither of justification or excuse, they concealed the greater part of their stores from both."—*Southey*.

re-established, supposing we had succeeded in the first. We could not stand at Oropesa, where we were, the position being but an indifferent one, and liable to be cut off, by Calera, from this place, its only point of retreat.

“ I preferred and recommended the latter : First, from a consideration of the losses which we, the English, must have sustained in these successive contests, without the chance of being able to take care of our wounded.

“ Secondly, from the consideration that if it were true that 30,000 men had been added to the French forces in this part of Spain, it was quite impossible for us to act upon the offensive. A diversion must be made in favour of the armies in this quarter, by the movement of some other body towards Madrid, which will draw off a part of their forces to oppose it, and then we may resume the offensive.

“ Thirdly, in order that these operations and battles should be successful, it was necessary that the marches to be made should be long, and made with great celerity. I am sorry to say that, from the want of food, the troops are now unequal to either the one or the other ; and it is more than probable that Victor would have been upon our backs before the first action between Soult and me could have been concluded.

“ Upon the whole, therefore, I am convinced that the measure which I have advised is the wisest, and likely to lead to the best, if not to the most brilliant, result.

“ As usual, General Cuesta wanted to fight general actions.”*

Cuesta, on the 5th, followed Wellesley's line of march, leaving a division of infantry and Albuquerque's cavalry to hold the bridge of Arzobispo. With Spanish indifference, the horse retired at noon into a wood to obtain shelter from the sun ; and, heedless of their outpost duties, most of the infantry were sleeping, when Mortier, with six thousand cavalry suddenly crossed the river by a ford,† and being

* Despatch, Puente del Arzobispo, 4th August, 1809.

† “ The French discovered the ford by acutely remarking that the Spanish

promptly supported by two brigades of infantry, routed the Spaniards, with the loss of five guns and four hundred prisoners. Had Soult been allowed to follow up his success, Cuesta's army must have been utterly destroyed. The miserable old man had abandoned his artillery and stores—a part was captured, and a larger portion saved without his even being aware that it had been endangered.*

The safety of the allied armies was finally secured by Joseph Buonaparte recalling the first corps, to unite it with the fourth, those opposed to the army of Venegas. The British head quarters was on the 11th at Jaraicejo, and the Spanish at Deleytoza; the former protecting the ford of Almarez, and the latter occupying the strong passes of Meza d'Ibor and Campillo. This position had every advantage which an army required both for safety and for comfort. The reserves could easily support the advanced posts; there were excellent communications with the country to the rear; and the whole front was so strong that an enemy would hardly venture to approach it.

The difficulties Sir Arthur Wellesley experienced were felt by his lieutenant, and also Beresford was not without his annoyances. When it was announced that the Marshal was about to enter Spain, desertions became numerous; and when the frontier was crossed, he found Romana loitering

horses, when brought to drink, came far into the stream, and, the place being sounded in the night of the 7th, a deep but practicable ford was discovered, about half a mile above the bridge."—*Napier*.

* "When he withdrew his main body from the bridge of Arzobispo to Peralada de Garbin, on the 7th, he left fifteen pieces of artillery by the road side, without a guard." These were discovered by a trumpeter attending a flag of truce, and the fellow having imprudently mentioned it in the French camp, a regiment of dragoons were detached, and succeeded in bringing them away. No circumstances could teach the Spanish general prudence. "All his ammunition and guns (forty pieces) were at the right bank of the Ibor, and, of course, at the foot of Meza, and within sight and cannon-shot of the enemy, on the right bank of the Tagus. They would have been taken by the first French patrols that approached, but that Sir Arthur Wellesley persuaded the Spanish staff-officers to have them dragged up the hill, in the course of the 10th, without Cuesta's knowledge."—*Napier*.

at Coruña, and the Duc del Parque anxious to hurry blindly into operations, for which he was totally unprepared. Beresford, with excellent discretion, took up a defensive line on the Agueda, and thus had time to perfect the formation of his raw battalions, while he secured the pass of Perales.

No encouragement certainly was held out for him to advance. The Spanish authorities refused a single ration to the Portuguese auxiliaries, and the magazines already purchased, paid for, and deposited at Ciudad Rodrigo, were seized by the cabildo, under a plea that a debt of Sir John Moore was still unliquidated!* What a French general would have done we may guess, and if the cabildo had been hanged at his own door, the cord would have been applied to a better purpose than it was always in the Peninsula.

It will not appear surprising, that the ingratitude of the Spaniards engendered in the British soldiery a feeling of national dislike, which their officers at times found it impossible to restrain. The military character of their confederates was held in just contempt, and in all their relations the English had reason to charge their allies with gross inhumanity and falsehood. After their enduring valour had won the field of Talavera, they saw themselves cruelly neglected, their sick perishing in the streets, and their wounded unnecessarily abandoned by the man, who, in common gratitude, was bound by every tie to cherish and protect them. A month afterwards, while the Spanish troops were well supplied, the English were unable to pro-

* "The Portuguese troops were not only refused provisions, but those which had been collected by Sir Arthur Wellesley, and put into the magazines at Ciudad Rodrigo, with a view to operate in that quarter, were seized by the cabildo, as security for a debt pretended to be due for the supply of Sir John Moore's army. The claim itself was of doubtful character, for Cradock had before offered to pay it, if the cabildo would produce the voucher for its being due, a preliminary which had not been complied with. There was also an English commissary at Ciudad Rodrigo, empowered to liquidate that and any other just claim upon the British military chest; but the cabildo, like all Spaniards, mistaking violence for energy, preferred this display of petty power to the interests of the common cause."—*Southey*.

cure the coarsest food. Their demands were met with sickening promises, which were never intended to be fulfilled; or by audacious falsehoods, asserting that their wants had been already provided for. The English might have borne their privations patiently, but to be starved and slandered was certainly too bad. They were accused by Cuesta of robbing the peasantry, intercepting his convoys, and absolutely trafficking in provisions; and, when their daily rations were half a pound of wheat, *in the grain*, a few ounces of flour twice in the week, and a quarter of a pound of goat's flesh, the Spanish authorities had the audacity to assert, "that the British were not only well, but *over supplied*." Now, to such misery was the army at this time reduced, that for want of forage, one thousand of their cavalry were totally dismounted; the horses of seven hundred more unfit for duty; the guns were nearly unhorsed, and a large proportion of the reserve ammunition had been given to Cuesta, merely for the purpose of obtaining for the conveyance of the sick, the country carts upon which it had been loaded. A stronger proof remains: on the evening of Talavera, when Sir Arthur Wellesley applied to the old Spaniard, who had more horses than he required, for ninety to replace those of his artillery which had been killed, that worthless ally, "on the very field of battle, and with the steam of English blood still reeking in his nostrils, refused the request!"*

Beresford's corps was quartered in the neighbourhood of Zarza Mayor; and about five thousand British troops, under Generals Lightburn and Catlin Crawford, were cantoned around Castello Branco. Although seriously weakened by the loss of the first and fourth corps, which Joseph had injudiciously withdrawn, Soult was still most anxious

* To understand the wretched state to which the army was reduced, it will be only necessary to observe, that the usage of a camp gives to the butchers, or to those who slay the animal, "the offal." The usual price of a goat on the Peninsula was *two* dollars; at this time "the offal" frequently produced *four*—officers and men bidding for this wretched food, a competition that proved sufficiently that starvation was in the British tents.

to cross the frontier with the second, third, and fifth corps, and menace the Portuguese capital; but Ney obstinately refused to cooperate, and thus an opportunity was lost of annihilating the power of Great Britain in the Peninsula, that never presented itself again.

“Napoleon never ceased to lament to the last hour of his life that the advice of Soult was not followed, who wished to take advantage of this concentration of five corps, in all ninety thousand combatants, in the valley of the Tagus, and march at once on Coria and Lisbon. Soon after, he dismissed Jourdan from his situation of major-general to Joseph, and conferred that important situation on Soult.”*

The affair of Arzobispo was the last important action of the campaign. Joseph, with Sebastiani's corps, his own guards, and the division of Desolles, moved on Toledo to crush Venegas. Soult and Mortier occupied Talavera, Plasencia, and Oropesa; and Ney returned towards Leon, to resume his former quarters in the neighbourhood of Ciudad Rodrigo and the Tormes. Soon afterwards, the latter Marshal handed the sixth corps over to General Marchand, and left the Peninsula.

During the late movements of the allied army, Wilson, who had been zealous, active, and most useful, watching the progress of events and intending to join Cuesta, sent his artillery to Talavera on the 3d. On the 4th, finding that the town had been abandoned, he fell back to Vellada; and next day, crossing the Teitar, threw himself into mountains; and, although beset on every side, baffled his numerous enemies, and took possession of the pass of Banos. There, on the 12th, with more gallantry than good discretion, he awaited Ney's attack, who, unconscious that the pass was occupied, was on his march towards Salamanca.

With Ciudad Rodrigo open to him, it was imprudent in Wilson to risk an action with a very insufficient force, added to a total want of artillery. As it was, he bravely

* Alison's History of Europe.

maintained his ground for some hours ; but the strength of his position could not make up for an immense superiority in the means, numbers, and discipline of his assailants. In the end he was totally routed ; but suffered little, indeed, from a defeat, that, to regular troops, would have proved ruinous.*

While a period of general inaction succeeded the affair at Banos, events of some moment, in a military and political view, were occurring. Wellesley was appointed camp-marshal of the Spanish armies, honoured by a flattering address, and presented with some valuable horses by the central Junta. The latter, with the address, he accepted, and also the nomination of captain-general—subject, nevertheless, to the consent of his own sovereign—but the pay and emoluments attached to the appointment, he firmly and respectfully declined.

Two official changes simultaneously occurred—and it is difficult to say which was the more loudly called for.

Mr. Frere, after perpetrating an infinity of mischief, was at last recalled, and the Marquis of Wellesley sent out to supersede him. The brother of the victor of Talavera was enthusiastically welcomed in the Peninsula ; his landing was marked by every token of satisfaction ; and at Cadiz and Seville, his reception was ardent, encouraging—and delusive.† A very short time served to show that Spanish gratitude was confined to empty professions ; “ and the first despatches from Sir Arthur opened to him a disheartening prospect.”

The other event of moment, was the forced resignation

* “ This they did not, as armies usually retreat, in compact bodies, and covered by their skirmishers, but by utterly dispersing, and again uniting at the particular point of rendezvous which, previous to their route, had been determined upon.”—*Marquis of Londonderry's Narrative*.

† “ A great concourse assembled to see him land ; and as he set foot on shore, a French flag was spread before him, that he might tread upon it in honour of his brother's victory. The people drew his carriage, which, in that country, is a mark of unusual respect ; and, still more extraordinary for Spaniards, returned ‘ a purse of gold ’ the marquis had given them.”

of Cuesta. His atrocious misconduct, even a Spanish Junta could not overlook—and Frere himself memorialized for his removal. A paralysis in one leg formed a fitting plea on which to ground a resignation; and when Lord Wellesley had notified, through Garay, to the government, that all relations and mutual support must end between the British and Spanish armies unless Cuesta was dismissed, the latter obtained permission to retire to the baths of Alhama, and Eguia, the next in seniority, was nominated to the chief command.

But “ Lord Wellesley had arrived too late; all the mischief that petulance, folly, bad faith, violence, and ignorance united, could inflict, was already accomplished; and while he was vainly urging a vile, if not a treacherous government to provide sustenance for the soldiers, Sir Arthur withdrew the latter from a post where the vultures, in their prescience of death, were already congregating.”*

The British head quarters were accordingly removed to Merida, while the light brigade fell back on Valencia de Alcantara. These movements sufficiently evinced Sir Arthur Wellesley's determination to retire his army from a country which, after all the devotion and successes of their allies, had been found superlatively ungrateful. That decision had due effect. The Junta was astounded; the people trembled for the consequences; and all were in dismay. Too late, promises were held out that the wants of the army should be supplied, as specious as any which had been plighted, and with no better certainty of being realized.† The earnestness with which the Junta expressed

* Napier.

† “ The pontoon bridge, which had been on the Tagus, near Almaraz, arrived here last night on its way to Badajoz. I cannot avoid taking this opportunity of drawing your Excellency's attention to the ease with which all the services of this description, required for the Spanish army, have been performed; at the same time that nothing could be done, in the most urgent requisitions of service, as well as of humanity, for the British army.

“ When the guns were taken from the enemy in the battle of Talavera, there was no difficulty about drawing them off; when the British army laid down its ammunition for want of the means of conveying it, there was no

their terror, and the strong assurances they offered of an ardent and an honest support, induced Lord Wellesley to suggest to his brother the necessity of his reconsidering how far an instant retreat into Portugal would be judicious. But Sir Arthur was not to be betrayed again by hollow professions; and although he consented to halt a few days at Merida, where he could obtain supplies for his army, and give time for the popular ferment to abate, he peremptorily refused to take up the line of the Guadiana, or cooperate with the Spanish armies again. He justly observed, that the line of the Tagus, where Eguia was posted, was so particularly strong, that if the Spaniards could maintain themselves at all, there was the place they could most easily effect it. Sir Arthur concluded by promising to occupy the frontier, hang upon the enemy's flanks, and prevent him, unless he came in great force, from passing the Guadiana. These reasons would have satisfied Lord Wellesley that his brother's judgment was correct, had not other circumstances already done so.*

Cuesta's rear-guard was but a short distance from the difficulty about transporting it; and there has been none in providing the means to remove the pontoon bridge from the neighbourhood of the Tagus, at Almaraz, to Badajoz. Yet the application of these means, at any period, to the service of the British army, would have relieved many of the difficulties under which we laboured, and would certainly have prevented the separation from the Spanish army at the moment at which it was made.

"But I beg your Excellency to observe, that among all the offers which were pressed upon me to divide the contents of the magazine of provisions at Truxillo, to take what I pleased from it, nay, to take the whole, even at the risk of starving the Spanish army, offers of which I knew and explained, and have since been able to prove, the fallacy, not one was made to assist the British army with a cart or a mule, or any means of transport, which abounded in the Spanish army."—*Despatch to Marquess Wellesley, dated Merida, 31st August, 1809.*

* "That miserable body, at one moment stupified with fear, at the next bursting with folly, now talked of the enemy's being about to retire to the Pyrenees, or even to the interior of France; and assuming the right to dispose of the Portuguese army as well as of their own, importunately pressed for an immediate, combined, offensive operation, by the troops of the three nations, to harass the enemy in his retreat; but, at the same time, they ordered Eguia to withdraw from Deleytoza, behind the Guadiana."—*Napier.*

town when the French pickets appeared upon the heights above it; and soon after, Victor, in person, rode into Talavera. He found the Plaza covered with the dead and dying—British, intermingled with French soldiers—and all indiscriminately abandoned, without shelter, food, or water, to perish in lingering torments. From a generous enemy these wretched men experienced a sympathy which their heartless allies had refused them.

“ After complimenting the English, and observing that they understood the laws and courtesies of war, he told them there was one thing which they did not understand, and that was, how to deal with the Spaniards. He then sent soldiers to every house, with orders to the inhabitants immediately to receive and accommodate the wounded of the two nations, who were lodged together—one English and one Frenchman; and he expressly directed that the Englishman should always be served first.

“ Many had already died in the square, and the stones were covered with blood: Victor ordered the townsmen to come with spades and besoms, remove and bury the dead, and cleanse the Plaza; he was speedily obeyed, and then the French said the place was fit for them to walk in.”*

Nor did Victor's kindness end in a present attention to the wants of the British sufferers. In the changes which took place soon afterwards among the different French corps, the fifth relieved the first, and Mortier superseded Victor in the command at Talavera. The Duke of Belluno recommended the English to the special protection of his successor; and the latter discharged the trust he had undertaken so faithfully, that, “ with a chivalrous sense of honour, he would not permit his own soldiers, although suffering severe privations themselves, to receive rations until the hospitals were first supplied.” What a contrast did this generous sympathy in a gallant enemy present, to the shameless neglect which the British had experienced at the hands of those who had called themselves their friends!

* Southey.

Immediately after the dead had been interred, and the wounded comfortably lodged, the French marshal proceeded to ascertain and appropriate the supplies which Talavera contained.* A town, that could barely afford from day to day half rations to the English, was found to be actually overstocked with provisions, and had a sufficiency of corn to feed the French armies for months to come. Much as the violation of private property is to be censured and regretted, from whomsoever they might look for sympathy, the inhabitants of Talavera had no right, certainly, to claim it from their British allies.

It was full time, indeed, for the British general to remove his troops. Regiments, a few weeks before, capable of exertions that were never equalled during the remainder of the Peninsular contest, were now unable to get through an ordinary march;† and not only in numbers, but in strength, Sir Arthur was miserably reduced. “The handful of troops whom he now commanded, was composed of second battalions—of mere youths, both officers and men—made certainly of different stuff, and inferior in stamina to those whom Sir John Moore had led. Indeed, the Guards, the Buffs, the 48th, and 61st, with the light

* “The next day the troops were assembled at noon, and liberty of pillaging for three hours was allowed them. Every man was provided with a hammer and a small saw for this purpose in his knapsack, and they filed off by beat of drum, in regular parties, to the different quarters of the town upon this work, as a business with which they were well acquainted. Nothing escaped their search: they discovered corn enough to supply the French army for three months. These magazines had been concealed both from the Spanish and English generals, and the owners were now punished for their treachery to their countrymen and their allies, by the loss of the whole. Dollars, enough to load eight mules, were also found hidden beneath some broken wheels and rubbish, in a yard belonging to one of the convents.”—*Southey*.

† Several causes, each of them, perhaps, sufficient of itself to produce the effect, were assigned for this increase of sickness. By some it was attributed, in no slight degree, to a sudden change from a state of violent exertion to a state of perfect repose; by others, to the unripe fruit, in which the troops too freely indulged; and by a third party, to the malaria, or unhealthy fogs, which, during the dry season, hang over the country in the vicinity of the Guadiana.”—*Lord Londonderry's Narrative*.

division which had lately joined, under Craufurd, were the only portions of the army which, at other periods, would have been regarded as fit for active service. Of the cavalry, again, it is impossible to speak in higher terms. They were dropping off daily; and both men and horses suffered from sickness, to a degree even more appalling than that which befel the infantry.”*

Such was the state to which an army was reduced, which, a few weeks before, had crossed the frontier full of life, and hope, and enterprise. Now, one half of the soldiery were fitter for the hospital than the field; and Wellesley was threatened on every side by an enemy four times his own number, and adding daily to their strength and general efficiency. As if nothing should be wanting to complete the embarrassment of the English commander, victory had crowned the French arms with success. Austria was once more prostrate at the feet of Napoleon; and the conquerors of Wagram, would, there was little doubt, soon be marching on the Pyrenees. It was also ascertained that the enemy were active in their preparations to enter Portugal by Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida; and, if the attempt were made, it was doubtful whether it could have been resisted.

But Wellesley did not despair. He had already expressed a confidence, that, if driven from Spain, he could still maintain himself in Portugal—“and into Portugal he prepared to remove, where, in comfortable cantonments, the health of his sick might be restored, and the strength of his weary and convalescents recruited.”† With him, to decide and act

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

† “The loss of the army was considerable; above three thousand five hundred men had been killed, or had died of sickness, or fallen into the enemy's hands. Fifteen hundred horses had perished from want of food, exclusive of those lost in battle; the spirits of the soldiers were depressed; and a heart-burning hatred of the Spaniards was engendered by the treatment they had endured. To fill the cup, the pestilent fever of the Guadiana, assailing bodies which fatigue and bad nourishment had already predisposed to disease, made frightful ravages. Dysentery, that scourge of armies, raged; and in a short time above five thousand men died in the hospitals.”—*Napier*.

were synonymous. The order was given, and, in five marches, the British army leisurely fell back, took up the line of the Guadiana, and head quarters were established at Badajoz.



CHAPTER VIII.

OPERATIONS OF THE SPANISH GENERALS—VENEGAS DEFEATED AT ALMONACID—
MARCHAND REPULSED BY DEL PARQUE—ARIEZEGA SUCCEEDS VENEGAS—
BATTLE OF OCANA—DEL PARQUE BEATEN AT ALBA DE TORMES—LETTER
TO MR. HUSKISSON—PAINFUL POSITION OF SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY—HIS
EXPLANATORY LETTER TO LORD CASTLEREAGH—THE KING APPROVES OF
HIS CONDUCT, AND RAISES SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY TO THE PEERAGE—
LETTER FROM THE DUKE OF PORTLAND—STATE OF FEELING IN ENGLAND—
OPENING SESSION OF 1810—DEBATES ON PENINSULAR AFFAIRS, AND GRANT
OF PENSION TO LORD WELLINGTON—EXTRACTS FROM SPEECHES AGAINST
AND IN FAVOUR OF THE GRANT—SPEECH OF MARQUESS WELLESLEY—OB-
SERVATIONS.

THE estimate formed by Sir Arthur Wellesley, as to the extent of support which he might have expected from the Spanish commanders, was verified “before the ink was dry upon his despatches.”

Venegas, after an absurd effort to reduce Toledo by bombardment, and a long and discreditable intrigue with the Junta, whose creature in every sense he was, consummated his folly by adopting a plan of operations suggested by Mr. Frere, than which nothing could have been more ruinous. He decided, contrary to the monitory remonstrances of Sir Arthur Wellesley, to fight a battle, and made the necessary arrangements to attack Sebastiani on the 12th of August. For this purpose he concentrated his *corps d'armée* on the 10th at Almonacid—a force, in every point, more respectable than any which the Spaniards had previously embattled in a field. But his aggressive intentions were anticipated. On the 11th he was attacked by Sebastiani, who was, with better reason, more anxious for a battle than himself.

A history of successive defeats has little in it to interest. Spanish disasters now followed fast upon each other; and, excepting one transient gleam of better fortune, with slight variations in their greater or less degree of ruin, the results of all were nearly similar. At Almonacid, Venegas was heavily defeated; guns, baggage, and ammunition were captured; 3000 men were slain, 4000 made prisoners, and of the wounded no account was taken. As Spanish armies generally saved themselves by abandoning all that renders a soldier effective, the wreck of Venegas' corps, by throwing away arms and clothing, distanced the French cavalry, and found a shelter in the Sierra Morena.

The Duke del Parque, in conjunction with Wilson's corps, had maintained a war of posts in the neighbourhood of Ciudad Rodrigo; and Ney's successor, Marchand, determined to suppress this spirit of aggression. Bad as they were, he undervalued the Spanish soldiery too much—and, in ground particularly favourable for irregular troops to risk a battle, he pressed Del Parque to action on the 18th of October, and on the heights of Tammames, met with a severe and a very unexpected repulse. The Spaniards fought obstinately; and, "after a sharp conflict, the unusual spectacle was exhibited of the French eagles receding before the Spanish standards; and Marchand drew off with the loss of 1500 men and one gun; while the Duke del Parque gave decisive proof of the reality of his success, by advancing immediately after the action, and taking unresisted possession of Salamanca, with 25,000 men."*

Venegas had been superseded, and his command given to Ariezega. Reinforced by Eguia's corps, the new general found himself at the head of 50,000 men, and sixty-five pieces of artillery. With all the inflated consequence of the Spanish character, Ariezega believed, with such an army, that nothing could keep him from the capital; and early in November, issuing from the Morena,

* Alison's History of Europe.

he marched to Ocana, where Milhaud's cavalry division, forming Sebastiani's advanced guard, was posted.

An affair occurred, which evening ended. Milhaud gallantly held his ground, and waited for reinforcements, until Joseph Buonaparte, with part of Soult's and Mortier's corps and his own guard, arrived upon the field, making an effective force of 25,000 infantry, 5000 cavalry, and fifty guns. From the church steeple of Ocana, Ariezega beheld early next morning, the increased number of his opponents, and when too late, would have retired to the Morena; but the hour for escape had passed. The ground about Ocana was every where unfavourable for defence; and the Spanish general selected the worst position an open plain afforded. His centre was in front of Ocana; while his wings were severed from each other by a deep ravine, that ran across the battle ground; one being thus, in the event of a disaster, totally prevented from retreating—and the other, had fortune been capricious and crowned his blunderings with success, as completely incapacitated from turning that accident to advantage.

Who may not anticipate the result? A total and a terrible defeat ensued.* Ten thousand men, mobbed in a

* On this occasion the Spaniards displayed an unwonted gallantry; and "this miserable defeat was the more mournful, because the troops that day gave proof enough, both of capacity and courage, to show how surely, under good discipline and good command, they might have retrieved the military character of their country. No artillery could have been better served. The first battalion of Guards, which was 900 strong, left upon the field fourteen officers, and half its men. Four hundred and fifty of a Seville regiment, which had distinguished itself with Wilson, at Puente de Baños, entered the action, and only eighty of them were accounted for when the day was over. Miserably commanded as the Spaniards were, there was a moment when the French, in attempting to deploy, were thrown into disorder by their well-supported fire, and success was at that moment doubtful. The error of exposing the army in such a situation must not be ascribed wholly to incapacity in Ariezega, who had distinguished himself not less for conduct than courage at Alcañiz: it was another manifestation of the national character,—of that obstinacy which no experience could correct, of that spirit which no disasters could subdue."—

mass, and without an outlet left them to retire by, yielded themselves prisoners. The open country allowed no place for broken troops to rally or conceal themselves. To the foot of the Morena, therefore, they were hunted by the French cavalry, "which, opening like a fan," spread itself over the barren plains, picking up the fugitives as they pleased. Fifty pieces of cannon, 20,000 prisoners, with the whole *matériel* of the Spanish army, fell into the hands of the victors. The French, tired of slaughtering men unable to resist, latterly contented themselves with merely disbanding the runaways as they were overtaken, and recommending them to return to their homes, and resume the pursuits they had abandoned, "as war was a trade for which they were so evidently unfitted."

The previous success of Del Parque, and the reduction of the French corps in his front, which had been largely drafted to strengthen Sebastiani's army, previous to the victory at Ocana, induced the Spanish general to advance towards Medina Seco, and quit the mountain country for the plains of Castile. A temporary success confirmed his false confidence. The French fell back upon their reserves, drew the imprudent leader on, and enabled Kellerman to force him to a decisive action at Alba de Tormes. The same fortune which usually attended the Spanish arms marked the contest. The cavalry ran off without crossing a sword, and the right wing was consequently uncovered, charged, and routed. That night the left of the Spanish army retired in good order; but next morning, on the appearance of a body of the enemy's horse, they broke without drawing a trigger, and fled in unaccountable confusion from the field. Most of their arms, and half their artillery were taken by the victors; and their casualties, according to the best accounts, exceeded 5000 men.

Such were the manifold disasters which, in a brief space of time befell the Spanish armies, who were happily described as "men familiar with defeat, formed only to be

broken, fighting only to be slain." No wonder, therefore, that the English general renounced all community of operations with such useless and unfortunate allies; and in the bitterness of a wounded spirit, expressed these sentiments to a functionary,* with whom he was at the time in correspondence:—"I wish that the eyes of the people of England were open to the real state of affairs in Spain as mine are; and I only hope, if they should not be so now, that they will not purchase the experience by the loss of an army. * * * * *

"The Spaniards have neither numbers, efficiency, discipline, bravery, nor arrangement to carry on the contest; and if I could consent to remain in Spain, its burthen and the disgrace of its failure would fall upon me."

That Sir Arthur Wellesley should feel and dread the responsibility attached to his command, was only what any officer must do who acted as he did, solely from his own decisions; and the peculiar temper and circumstances of the times, besides, rendered his position one of fearful insecurity. His situation was singularly and painfully anomalous; unexampled success had brought him but closer to the brink of a precipice; and a splendid victory actually drew down upon the conqueror a torrent of obloquy and misrepresentation. The rabid abuse of factious demagogues at home, Wellesley might have despised and disregarded; but where the injured were ever taught to seek for justice—where, as it might have been expected, he could have boldly demanded the meed of approbation his high deserts had merited—even there, within the walls of the British senate-house, his actions were mistated, his motives impugned, and his professional abilities impertinently questioned and coarsely undervalued. No wonder, then, that he refused to prolong a contest within the Spanish frontier, in which success could obtain no gratitude, and failure would be certain to entail disgrace.

* Mr. Huskisson, Secretary of the Treasury.

When Wellesley determined to discontinue further operations in conjunction with Venegas or Del Parque, he was well assured how much the course of action he adopted, would expose him to unpopularity in the country, and calumny at home. But the field of Talavera, and the subsequent defeats of Arzobispo and Almonacid, had brought with them a fatal conviction, that the Spanish people were neither able to assist themselves, nor inclined to support their more efficient allies. On this conviction he acted; and in a clear *exposé* of the actual state of Spain, he thus gave to Lord Castlereagh a manly detail of the causes, which had induced him to retire upon the frontier of Portugal.

“ *Merida, 25th August, 1809.*

“ The information which I have acquired in the last two months has opened my eyes respecting the state of the war in the Peninsula; and I shall just state a few facts which will enable the king’s ministers to form their own opinions upon it.

“ I calculate the French force in the Peninsula now to consist of about 125,000 men: of this number, about 70,000 are in this part of Spain; St. Cyr’s corps, about 20,000 men, are engaged in the siege of Gerona; Suchet’s, about 14,000, in Aragon; and the remainder are employed in different garrisons, such as Avila, &c., and in keeping up the communication with France: all of which, if necessary, are disposable for the field. These 125,000 men are exclusive of the garrisons of Pamplona, Barcelona, &c. &c.

“ These troops, you will observe, are all in Spain; and against this force the Spaniards have, under Venegas and Eguia, late Cuesta’s army, about 50,000 men; Romana, the Duque del Parque, and every thing to the northward, about 25,000; Blake may have gotten together again about 5000 or 6000; and I believe there is nothing in Aragon and Catalonia, excepting an armed population.

“ Thus, the Spaniards have not, at the end of nearly eighteen months after the commencement of the revolution,

above 80,000 men, of which the composition and quality will be found still more defective than the numbers are deficient, to carry on the contest with the French, even in their present strength.

“ To these numbers add all the troops we can bring into the field at present, which are about 25,000 men, and about 10,000 Portuguese, and you will see that the allies are at this moment inferior in point of numbers only to the enemy in the Peninsula. However, in this account of the troops of the allies, I do not reckon many garrisons and towns occupied by both Spaniards and Portuguese; nor do I reckon the French garrisons. I count only those men on both sides who can be brought into the field to fight.

“ In respect to the composition of these armies, we find the French well supplied with troops of the different descriptions and arms required: viz. infantry, artillery, and cavalry, heavy and light.

“ Cuesta’s army had about 7000 cavalry, Venegas about 3000, and there may be about 2000 more cavalry distributed throughout Spain:

“ The English have about 2500 cavalry left, and the Portuguese army may have 500 or 600. Probably, if all this cavalry were efficient, and could be divided as it ought to be, it might be sufficient, and might be found more numerous than that of the French in the Peninsula: but you will observe that all the cavalry is now in the south, and Romana’s army (which it is most important to bring forward, as, unless it is brought forward, the allies can never make any impression on the French to the southward,) has neither cavalry nor artillery, and cannot quit the mountains; neither has the Duque del Parque more than one regiment, or Blake more than the same number.

“ I come now to the description of the troops; and here I am sorry to say that our allies fail us still more than they do in numbers and composition.

“ The Spanish cavalry are, I believe, nearly entirely without discipline. They are in general well clothed,

armed, and accoutred, and remarkably well mounted, and their horses are in good condition—I mean those of Eguia's army, which I have seen. But I have never heard any body pretend that in any one instance have they behaved as soldiers ought to do in presence of an enemy. They make no scruple of running off, and after an action are to be found in every village, and every shady bottom within fifty miles of the field of battle.

“The Spanish artillery are, as far as I have seen of them, entirely unexceptionable, and the Portuguese artillery excellent.

“In respect to the great body of all armies—I mean the infantry—it is lamentable to see how bad that of the Spaniards is, and how unequal to a contest with the French. They are armed, I believe, well; they are badly accoutred, not having the means of saving their ammunition from the rain; not clothed in some instances at all, in others, clothed in such a manner as to make them look like peasants, which ought of all things to be avoided; and their discipline appears to me to be confined to placing them in the ranks, three deep, at very close order, and to the manual exercise.

“It is impossible to calculate upon any operation with these troops. It is said that sometimes they behave well; though I acknowledge that I have never seen them behave otherwise than ill. Bassecourt's corps, which was supposed to be the best in Cuesta's army, and was engaged on our left in the mountains, at the battle of Talavera, was kept in check throughout the day by one French battalion; this corps has since run away from the bridge of Arzobispo, leaving its guns; and many of the men, according to the usual Spanish custom, throwing away their arms, accoutrements, and clothing.

“This practice of running away, and throwing off arms, accoutrements, and clothing, is fatal to every thing, excepting a re-assembly of the men in a state of nature; who as regularly perform the same manœuvre the next time an occasion offers. Nearly 2000 ran off on the evening of the

27th, from the battle of Talavera, (not a hundred yards from the place where I was standing,) who were neither attacked, nor threatened with an attack, and who were frightened only by the noise of their own fire: they left their arms and accoutrements on the ground; their officers went with them, and they, and the fugitive cavalry, plundered the baggage of the British army which had been sent to the rear. Many others went, whom I did not see.

“Nothing can be worse than the officers of the Spanish army; and it is extraordinary, that when a nation has devoted itself to war, as this nation has, by the measures it has adopted in the last two years, so little progress has been made in any one branch of the military profession by any individual, and that the business of an army should be so little understood. They are really children in the art of war, and I cannot say that they do any thing as it ought to be done, with the exception of running away and assembling again in a state of nature.”*

To the ministry at home, and, indeed, to all who would dispassionately consider the causes and necessities which influenced his conduct, Sir Arthur Wellesley’s reasoning was conclusive, and it was gratifying to the victor of Talavera to know, that in the highest quarter his services were properly appreciated. On receiving official intelligence of Joseph Buonaparte’s defeat, the king raised Sir Arthur to the peerage, and created him Baron Douro of Wellesley, and Viscount Wellington of Talavera, and of Wellington, in the county of Somerset; and his accession to these well-merited honours was thus announced, in a letter from the Duke of Portland, which reached LORD WELLINGTON at Badajoz.

“London, 22d August, 1809.

“MY DEAR SIR ARTHUR,

“To congratulate you on your victories would be so feebly to express my sense of your services, that I must

* Wellington Despatches.

indulge, in the first instance, the gratitude which I feel to be due to you, and request your acceptance of my best thanks for the credit as well as the service you have done to your country, which I trust will make all the impression which it ought to do on the minds of all descriptions of persons in the kingdom.

"Nothing could be more gracious than the king's acceptance of your services, or more immediate and decisive than his approbation of the suggestion of creating you a Viscount. Long may you enjoy that honour, and be placed, for the advantage and honour of your country, in those situations which may enable you to add to your own.

"Believe me, &c.

"PORTLAND."

"Lieut.-Gen. the Hon. Sir A. Wellesley, K. B."

England was at this time in a state of feverish excitement, which never had been exhibited at any former period so violently, since the French Revolution had first convulsed the continent. Party was carried to a height scarcely to be credited,—every day seemed "big with the fate of empires," and every hour produced some startling change. All political relations were marked by an uncertainty, that none could count upon their duration for an hour; and all connected with the government, held office by a tenure which the news of the next courier might destroy. Indeed it would have been difficult to determine, whether at home or abroad, affairs were most turbulent, perilous, and insecure.

Many untoward events had shaken the stability of the government, and rendered it so unpopular, that its dissolution was momentarily to be dreaded. The inquiry into the conduct of the Duke of York, which induced him to resign the command in chief of the army; the fatal expedition to Walcheren; the secession of Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning from the cabinet, whose talents had been its main support; all strengthened the power of the oppo-

sition, and their attacks on ministers became daily more virulent and determined. The Peninsular expedition was by them made a *pendant* to that of Walcheren; and the honours conferred upon Lord Wellington, and a subsequent recommendation to attach a pension to support the dignity, produced discussions, which, from the obstinacy and violence with which they were maintained, rendered the opening session of 1810 memorable indeed.

In the debates which ensued, "it was a melancholy thing to see how strongly the spirit of opposition manifested itself even in those persons whose opinions and feelings, regarding the justice and necessity of the war, were in entire sympathy with the government."

The Earl St. Vincent assailed the government in a speech only remarkable for its violence. He taxed them with producing the most frightful disasters, and of reducing the country to a state which rendered an ignominious peace inevitable.

Lord Grenville in his attack was equally intemperate.

"The day must come," he said, "when ministers would have to render an account to parliament of the treasures which they had wasted, and the lives which they had sacrificed. Their measures had uniformly failed, and presented nothing but an unbroken series of disgraceful, irremediable failures; and yet they had the confidence, the unblushing confidence, to tell us of a victory! Gilded disasters were called splendid victories; and the cypress that droops over the tombs of our gallant defenders, whose lives have been uselessly sacrificed, was to be denominated blooming laurels!" He concluded by moving, as an amendment to the address, "That vigorous and effectual proceedings should be instituted, as the only atonement which could be made to an injured people!"

In the lower house, the same virulent spirit was even more strongly displayed. In alluding to the Peninsular war, Mr. Ward said, that "Lord Wellington's exploits at Talavera had left the cause of Spain as desperate as they

found it, and, in their consequences, resembled not victories, but defeats. For, by what more disastrous consequences could defeat have been followed, than by a precipitate retreat—by the loss of 2000 men, left to the mercy of the enemy upon that spot where they had just fought and conquered—but fought and conquered in vain; that spot which, as it were in mockery to them, we had endeavoured to perpetuate in the name of the general? By what worse could it have been followed than by the loss of all footing in Spain, the ruin of another army, and the virtual renunciation of all the objects of the war?”

Mr. Ponsonby spoke in a similar strain. “It was a crisis,” he said, “which called upon the House of Commons to put forth its penal powers;” and added, “that had he the choice between punishment and pardon, he should prefer punishment; because the circumstances of the country imperiously required some solemn example.”

Against the Marquess Wellesley, Mr. Whitbread chiefly poured out the phials of his wrath.

“To Spain,” he said, “he had gone, after delays, which ought to be accounted for. And what were his services when he got there? Why, he went through the mummerly of dancing on the French flag! He visited the Junta, went through all the routine of etiquette and politics, made a speech about reform, took his glass after dinner, and religiously toasted the Pope. On his return, of course, when the places were going, he came in for his share, and made one of the administration which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had at length compiled.”

After denouncing the administration as weak, incapable, and inefficient, Mr. Whitbread continued:—“Let our relative situation with the enemy be well considered. Austria totally gone, the French force concentrated, and Spain the only object of Napoleon. We are told that Portugal may be defended by 30,000 men; but would not Buonaparte know our force to a drummer? and where we had 30,000, he would have three-score. Who would

struggle against such fearful odds? We held our ground in that country just at the will of the French emperor, and, at his option, he could drive us out of it. And what could we expect from our present ministry—or, rather, from a single man; for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in fact, stood alone? The Marquess Wellesley, of whom such account had been made, might be considered as completely insignificant. Who was he? The governor of India;—the man who had scarcely escaped the censure of that house for his cruel tyranny!—the man who had assailed the press, that sacred palladium of the people!—the friend of despotism!—the foe of liberty! Could this man say to Buonaparte, in the noble indignation of insulted virtue, I have not done as you have? Alas! if such a man had strength, he would indeed be a fearful acquisition to such a government; but he was known, and therefore weak and harmless. Peace,” Mr. Whitbread said, “should be the cry of the nation. Peace—particularly, because the thralldom of millions of our fellow-subjects was the tenure by which this incapable Junta held their offices.”

If the temper of the lower house was violent, that of the upper was nothing milder. A vote of thanks to Lord Wellington produced an acrimonious debate. Earls Suffolk and Grosvenor opposed the motion, and were supported by Earl Grey.

He denied “that the battle of Talavera was a victory; it had been trumpeted as such, he said, by ministers, but in so doing they had practised an unworthy deception. Lord Wellington had betrayed want of capacity, and want of skill; the consequences had been most disastrous; nor did we yet know the extent of the evil. One army had been compelled to retreat into Portugal, where he feared it was in a very critical situation, and where, from the unhealthiness of the position which it occupied, disease had made such an alarming progress among the troops, that he believed their numbers did not at that time exceed nine thousand effective men.”

The Marquess Wellesley ably and temperately defended his own and the conduct of his brother; and the debate closed, with a violent tirade against ministers from Lord Grenville.

The vote of thanks was opposed in like manner in the House of Commons. General Tarleton said, that "Lord Wellington's despatches were vain-glorious, partial, and incorrect; that he had been deficient in information concerning the amount and situation of Soult's army; and that he had been compelled to a precipitate retreat, after abandoning his sick and wounded." Mr. Whitbread affirmed, that "the battle had been more a repulse than a victory; nor could he," he said, "withhold a tear, when he thought of the British blood which had been spilt in sacrifice to incapacity and folly. The consequence of the battle was, that the army had no other retreat than through Deleitosa; and their condition during that retreat was such, that many hundreds perished on the road from famine. The Spanish cause was now more hopeless than ever."

The motion, however, received an unexpected support from one upon whom ministers looked as an enemy. Mr. Windham flung party views aside, and manfully delivered his opinions.

"The unproductive consequences of this victory," he said—"for a victory it was, and a glorious victory—were not to be put in comparison with the military renown which Sir Arthur Wellesley had gained. Ten or fifteen years ago, it was thought on the continent that we might do something at sea—that an Englishman was a sort of sea-animal; but our army was considered as nothing. Our achievements in Egypt first entitled us to the name of a military power; the battle of Maida confirmed it; and he would not give the battles of Vimiero, Coruña, and Talavera, for a whole Archipelago of sugar islands."

On neither of these debates did the opposition venture upon a division. For another trial, they held back their strength—and a question more likely to catch popular

feeling than one of empty honours, was reserved, as that on which they should stand an issue.

The king's message recommended that a pension of 2000*l.* should be settled upon Lord Wellington, and the two next heirs to his title in succession. "With the grant of the peerage," Mr. Calcraft said, "that house had nothing to do; he was sorry it had been conferred; but though there was no remedy for it, the house ought not to add to it the pension. Pensions and thanks might be voted, but they could not permanently blind the country. Whatever the public opinion might be now, it would not be with ministers upon this subject a month hence, when the whole fruits of Lord Wellington's victories and campaigns would develop themselves to public view. It was mournful and alarming to hear that Lord Wellington had said that he could defend Portugal with 50,000 men, provided 30,000 of them were British; for if the French were in earnest in their designs upon that country, before three months, Lord Wellington and his army would be in England. Neither Portugal, nor any other country, could be defended by victories like that of Talavera."

Generals Craufurd and Loftus supported the grant, on the fair principle, that a very moderate fortune, which Lord Wellington had neglected many opportunities of improving, unless thus assisted, would render his peerage any thing but desirable. Sir Francis Burdett, and Mr. Whitbread, objected to the proposed pension. Their arguments were in the spirit of the day; and a short time proved that they were factious, mean, and illiberal. An overwhelming majority, however, confirmed a grant, that was afterwards munificently increased by a country who still felt itself his debtor.

The policy of continuing the war in Spain—the value of the victory of Talavera—the ability with which the past campaign had been conducted—and the claims Lord Wellington had justly established to the honours he had received, were ably defended by Perceval, Wilberforce, and

Canning, in the Commons. In the Lords, a manlier course had been taken by the opposition; and while ministers were bitterly attacked, the Whig leaders bore honourable testimony to the glory gained by Britain in the Peninsula.

The Marquess of Lansdowne, while he moved a vote of censure upon ministers for "ignorance and rashness," observed, "that whatever he might think of the policy which led to the battle of Talavera, or of its consequences, he should ever contemplate the action itself as a proud monument of glory to the general who commanded, and to the army who won that memorable day." Lord Holland went still further, and advocated strongly the principle which his own party had so violently opposed. But the most effective speech of that debate, was that delivered by the Marquess Wellesley; after triumphantly defending his brother and himself, he thus enforced the wisdom and the necessity of assisting the Spanish cause.

"If ever Europe," he said, "was to be delivered, England must be the great agent in her deliverance; and justly he might have added, that the fairest opportunity for effecting that deliverance opened when Spain magnanimously rose to resist the most flagrant usurpation of which history records an example. Not only were we called upon by the splendour, the glory, the majesty of the Spanish cause to lend our aid—a principle of self-preservation called upon us also. These efforts on the part of Spain afforded us the best chance of providing for our own security, by keeping out of the hands of France the naval means of Spain, which Buonaparte was so eager to grasp, knowing they were the most effectual weapons he could wield against the prosperity and the power of Great Britain.

"The views of Buonaparte in his endeavours to subjugate Spain, were obvious, even to superficial observers. The old government had placed at his disposal the resources of that country, but the old government was feeble and effete; and, however subservient to his will, he knew it was an instrument which he could not pitch to the tone of his

designs; he therefore resolved to seize upon the whole Peninsula, and to establish in it a government of his own. He may have been prompted to this partly by his hatred to the Bourbon race, partly by the cravings of an insatiable ambition, partly by the vain desire of spreading his dynasty over Europe, partly by mere vanity—but his main object was, that he might wield with new vigour the naval and colonial resources of Spain, to the detriment of Great Britain. This alone could suit the vastness of his designs; this alone could promise to gratify his mortal hatred of the British name. By the entire subjugation of the Peninsula, and the full possession of its resources, he knew that he should be best enabled to sap the fundamental security of these kingdoms. Therefore, how highly important was it to keep alive there a spirit of resistance to France!

“There were no means, however unprincipled, which Buonaparte would scruple to employ for the attainment of his ends. To him, force and fraud were alike—force, that would stoop to all the base artifices of fraud—fraud, that would come armed with all the fierce violence of force. Every thing which the head of such a man could contrive, or the arm execute, would be combined and concentrated into one vast effort—and that effort would be strained for the humiliation and destruction of this country. Universal dominion is, and will continue to be, the aim of all French governments; but it is pre-eminently the object to which such a mind as Buonaparte’s will aspire. England alone stands in the way of the accomplishment of that design, and England he has therefore resolved to strike down and extirpate. How, then, were these daring projects to be met? How, but by cherishing, wherever it may be found—but particularly in the Peninsula—the spirit of resistance to the usurpations of France? If we have saved the navy of Portugal—if we have saved the Spanish ships at Ferrol—if we have enabled the Portuguese government to migrate to their colonies—if we have succeeded in yet securing the naval and colonial resources both of Portugal and Spain—

how have these important objects been achieved, but by fomenting in both these kingdoms a spirit of resistance to the overwhelming ambition of Buonaparte? To this end must all our efforts be now directed. This is the only engine which now remains for us to work in opposition to Buonaparte's gigantic designs. Why, then, should we depart from that salutary line of policy? What is there to dissuade or discourage us from adhering to it? I can discover nothing in the aspect of Spanish affairs that wears any thing like the hue and complexion of despair. If, indeed, it had appeared that this spirit began to languish in the breast of the Spaniards—if miscarriages, disasters, and defeats, had been observed to damp the ardour and break down the energies of the Spanish mind, then might it be believed that further assistance to the Spanish cause would prove unavailing. But, fortunately for this country, not only is there life still in Spain, but her patriotic heart still continues to beat high; the generous and exalted sentiment which first prompted us to lend our aid to the cause of Spain should therefore be still maintained in full force, and should still inspirit us to continue that to the last moment of her resistance. The struggle in which Spain is now engaged is not merely a Spanish struggle; in that struggle are committed the best—the very vitals of England. With the fate of Spain, the fate of England is now inseparably blended. Should we not therefore stand by her to the last? For my part, my lords, as an adviser of the crown, I shall not cease to recommend to my sovereign to continue to assist Spain to the latest moment of her resistance. It should not dishearten us that Spain appears to be in the very crisis of her fate; we should, on the contrary, extend a more anxious care over her at a moment so critical. For in nations, and above all in Spain, how often have the apparent symptoms of dissolution been the presages of new life, and of renovated vigour? Therefore, I would cling to Spain in her last struggle; therefore, I would watch her last agonies; I would wash and heal her

wounds; I would receive her parting breath; I would catch and cherish the last vital spark of her expiring patriotism. Nor let this be deemed a mere office of pious charity; nor an exaggerated representation of my feelings; nor an overcharged picture of the circumstances that call them forth. In the cause of Spain, the cause of honour and of interest is equally involved, and inseparably allied. It is a cause in favour of which the finest feelings of the heart unite with the soundest dictates of the understanding."

It has been happily observed by the ablest historian of the day,* that, "in a determination to risk at once his popularity, military renown, and chances of glory, rather than either abandon his duty, or deviate from the plan by which he saw it could alone be discharged, the brightest page in the career of Wellington is to be found;" and, it might be added, that none but a master spirit would have dared to hope aught from a cause which seemed so utterly destroyed. What was the summary of Spanish history "Town after town was taken—army after army dispersed—every battle a defeat—and every defeat sensibly diminishing the heat of resistance."† Spain, in point of fact, was already gasping at the foot of Napoleon—and Britain well nigh exhausted by the immensity of her own efforts.‡

* Alison.

† Napier.

‡ "The forces by land and sea which she (England) put forth in this year were unparalleled. With a fleet of 240 ships of the line, and nearly 1100 vessels of all sizes, she maintained the undisputed command of the waves; blockaded every hostile harbour in Europe; at once chased the Toulon squadron ashore, at the mouth of the Rhone; burned the Brest fleet amidst the shallows of Basque Roads; drove the Russian navy under the cannon of Cronstadt; and still found thirty-seven ships of the line, wherewith to strike a redoubtable blow at the fleets in the Scheldt. With 100,000 regular troops, she maintained her immense colonial empire in every part of the world; and, as it suited her convenience, rooted out the French flag from their last transmarine possessions. With 190,000 more, she swayed the sceptre of Hindostan, and kept in subjection her seventy millions of Asiatic subjects. With 400,000 regular and local militia, she amply provided for the safety of the British islands; while, with another 100,000 gallant disposable soldiers, she carried on the war with unexampled vigour on the continent of Europe, and menaced at once Antwerp, Madrid, and Naples."—*Alison's History of Europe.*

Relieved by his alliance with Austria, he could turn with safety his enormous masses from the Rhine to the Tagus; and what should prevent the fulfilment of his oft-repeated threat, that “he would drive the leopards to the sea?”

And so most men thought—and few there were who did not yield to despondency. One, however, did not despair—and he was WELLINGTON!



CHAPTER IX.

GLOOMY PROSPECTS OF THE BRITISH ARMY—SICKNESS INCREASES—LORD WELLINGTON HIMSELF INDISPOSED—HIS OCCUPATIONS AT HEAD QUARTERS—REPAIRS TO LISBON, AND COMMENCES THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS—SICKNESS CONTINUES—THE ARMY QUIT THE GUADIANA, AND TAKE UP FRESH CANTONMENTS—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—DIFFICULTIES AND DETERMINATION OF LORD WELLINGTON—LETTER TO MR. VILLIERS—LICENTIOUS CONDUCT OF THE TROOPS—WELLINGTON'S OPINIONS UNCHANGED—STILL MAINTAINS THAT PORTUGAL WAS DEFENSIBLE—DESPATCH TO LORD LIVERPOOL—WAR IN THE EAST OF SPAIN—GERONA—ITS SIEGE AND SURRENDER—FALL OF HOSTALRICH—FRENCH CROSS THE SIERRA MORENA—ANDALUSIA OVERRUN—CADIZ INVESTED—ALBUQUERQUE MARCHES TO ITS RELIEF, AND SAVES THE CITY.

THE period when Lord Wellington took up the line of the Guadiana, was among the gloomiest epochs of British history since the accession of the reigning monarch. Napoleon's glory had reached its zenith, and Europe had striven in vain to arrest his march of victory. The proudest nations in their turn had suffered humiliating defeats; and the power of Prussia, Russia, and Austria were humbled to the dust. It is true that in the Peninsula the struggle was still feebly maintained; but it seemed a contest continued after hope was ended—a parting effort, which, like an expiring flame, the breath of the conqueror of Wagram could extinguish when he pleased.

The cantonments of the British army were selected for their general conveniency; and where the soldiers could be best supplied, and the cavalry obtain forage, the different

brigades were quartered.* In autumn, the insalubrity of Estremadura is proverbial: fevers and agues prevail; and men already severely visited by dysentery, were exposed to a worse disease, which, from its virulence, threatened to produce more calamitous results even than the sword itself. From its ravages no class was excepted:† the soldier and his officer suffered in common; and the iron frame of that chief, which had endured an Indian sun and borne the rigors of a Belgian winter, yielded for a season, to the pestilential influence of this unhealthy province. For two days Lord Wellington was unable to keep the saddle; and—a most unusual thing for him to do—while the army was retiring from Jaraicejo to Badajoz, he travelled in a carriage. At head quarters he was slightly indisposed again, but he rallied speedily; and, fortunately for the cause of

* Disposition of the British army on the 7th September, 1809:—

Badajoz	Head Quarters and the Artillery.
Merida	{ The brigade of heavy Cavalry, and troop of Horse Artillery.
Montijo, Puebla de la Calzada	
Talavera Real	{ One division of Infantry and a brigade of Artillery.
Near Badajoz	
Campo Mayor	One do. do.
Albuquerque	One squadron of Cavalry.
La Roca	One do. do.
Montijo	One do. do.
Talavera Real	One do. do.
Badajoz	One do. do.
Elvas	One do. do.
Campo Mayor	One do. do.
Olivencia	Two do. do.
Villa Vicoza	Four do. do.

† “The sickness of the army, from the same cause, has increased considerably, particularly among the officers, who have fared no better than the soldiers; and have had nothing but water to drink, and frequently nothing but meat, without salt, to eat, and seldom any bread, for the last month.

“Indeed there are few, if any, officers or soldiers of the army, who, though doing their duty, are not more or less affected by dysentery, and the whole lie out, and nothing can be got for them in this part of the country.”—*Despatch, dated Truxillo, 21st August.*

Europe, combated and conquered a malady, under which the youngest and the hardiest had sunk.

But the inaction of winter quarters to Lord Wellington brought “no day of rest.” The duties of his bureau were manifold and laborious; and the few hours he could steal from the confinement an extensive correspondence required, were devoted to field sports,* or consumed in visiting his hospitals. Early in October he set out for Lisbon; and the object of that journey engrossed the undivided attention of the army. The general belief was, that its final departure from the Peninsula was an event not distant; and, indeed, all circumstances tended to strengthen this opinion. The melancholy state to which sickness had reduced the English battalions,†—the proven worthlessness of their Spanish allies,—the astounding successes which had attended the arms of Napoleon, and placed the ascendancy of France upon a pinnacle of strength it had never reached before; while his union with “a daughter of the Cæsars,” to all appearance had established its solidity,—all these things denoted that the abandonment of Portugal was an inevitable event, and that an army, brave and successful in every previous trial, must of necessity yield to a power no longer

* The following *naïve* passage concludes the first despatch to which he subscribed the name of WELLINGTON:—

“This is the first time I have signed my new name. Would the Regency give me leave to have a *chasse* at Villa Vicoza?”—*Despatch, Badajoz, 16th September, 1809.*

† State of the Army at Badajoz, 25th September, 1809:—

Artillery	1,947
Cavalry	4,272
Infantry	28,409
Waggon Train	389
Total	35,017
<i>In Hospital</i>	8,827
Command and Missing	2,526
Total absent	11,353
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Total present under arms	23,664

to be opposed, and decline farther contest with a nation "emerged victorious from eighteen years of warfare."*

Such were the speculations which Lord Wellington's absence from head quarters had occasioned; but none could be more erroneous. Instead of preparations for an embarkation, he was devising measures for holding the country to the last; and, with a singular prescience of events, employed in a personal examination of the ground, on which he afterwards gave a fatal check to the progress of French conquest. To plan the lines of Torres Vedras had been the object of his journey; and the ability that designed these extensive defences, was only equalled by the promptness with which they were executed. If the architect of St. Paul's trusted for immortality to his works, Wellington might have safely rested a soldier's fame on his; for "neither the Roman in ancient, nor Napoleon in modern times, have left such a monument of their power and perseverance."†

The sickness in the British army so rapidly increased, that the average amount of deaths exceeded 900 monthly. The malady of the country required that wine and spirits should be liberally administered; and, unfortunately, the quantity which the commissariat could procure was unequal to the demand, and irregularly issued;—and bark, a specific in intermittent fever, was not to be obtained.

The wounded recovered quickly,—but the hospitals at Elvas and Estremos were crowded with the sick. Happily the season changed—the weather became cold and frosty. Clothing and supplies reached the British cantonments; and in the middle of December Wellington quitted his unhealthy quarters, and, crossing the Tagus, directed his march upon the Mondego.

This change in the position of the army was attended with the best results; and those who had survived the malaria of Estremadura, felt the influence of a healthier

* Alison.

† Ibid.

climate, and recovered rapidly. Convalescents from the hospitals joined their regiments in large numbers; and though the *morale* of the army had deteriorated, every day its health improved, and its general efficiency was re-established.

The position of the allied army on the 15th of January was thus described, in a despatch from Lord Wellington to Lord Liverpool, dated from Viseu :—

“The British army have arrived in their cantonments on the frontiers of Beira. We occupy Guarda, Pinhel, Celorico, and Viseu, with three divisions of infantry, and a regiment of cavalry; General Hill’s division of infantry is at Abrantes, and the remainder of the British cavalry on the Tagus, between Abrantes and Santarem.

“I have left them on the Tagus, on account of the want of forage and of stables, in this part of the country.

“I have made this disposition of the army, with a view to form, of the whole British and Portuguese armies, two principal corps;—one for the defence of the provinces south of the Tagus, which will consist of General Hill’s division of British infantry, two brigades of Portuguese infantry, one brigade of British, and two brigades of Portuguese cavalry, one brigade of British, and two brigades of Portuguese artillery;—and the other, of three divisions of British infantry, and all the Portuguese infantry not employed in garrisons, and the British cavalry, and the British and Portuguese artillery.

“The Portuguese troops are cantoned in the rear of the British troops, with which they are destined eventually to act.

“The Lusitanian legion, and some Portuguese militia, occupy Castello Branco, and the mountains between the Tagus and the Mondego.”

During the whole course of the Peninsular struggle, the talents and moral courage of Lord Wellington were never more severely tried than at this period of the war. In his despatches, many a record of his difficulties will be

found, interspersed with assurances of his determination to persevere in the course of action he had recommended, equally unmoved by the misgivings of timid friends, or the slanders of ungenerous enemies. In a letter to Mr. Villiers,* he says—"I believe there never was an officer, but certainly never a British officer, placed in so difficult a situation as I am in. Every body looks for British assistance in every thing: money, stores, provisions, and all that keep an army together, are required by both Spaniards and Portuguese; and they, and the British nation, and even the government, conceive that I have all at my command, and that I have only to say the *word*, to supply all their wants, and satisfy all their demands. The fact is, however, that I have not more than enough for my own army; and I have received the order of the government to give nothing.

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"You see the dash which the Common Council of the city of London have made at me! I act with a sword hanging over me, which will fall upon me, whatever may be the result of affairs here; but they may do what they please, I shall not give up the game here as long as it can be played."

To keep the allied armies together, with the limited means placed at his disposal, was a task of serious difficulty; and a heavier responsibility arose from the insubordination of his own soldiers. In a despatch to the Earl of Liverpool,† Lord Wellington describes the licentious conduct of the troops in frightful colours:—"I am concerned," he writes, "to tell you that, notwithstanding the pains taken by the general and other officers of the army, the conduct of the soldiers is infamous. They behave well, generally, when with their regiments, and under the inspection of their officers, and the general officers of the army; but when detached, and coming up from hospitals, although invariably under the command of an officer, and always well fed and

* Dated Pombal, 2d Jan. 1810.

† Dated Viseu, 24th Jan. 1810.

taken care of, and received as children of the family by the housekeeper in Portugal, they commit every description of outrage. They have never brought up a convoy of money, that they have not robbed the chest; nor of shoes, or any other article that could be of use to them, or could produce money, that they do not steal something.

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“ At this moment there are three general courts-martial sitting in Portugal, for the trial of soldiers guilty of wanton murders, (no less than four people have been killed by them since we returned to Portugal,) robberies, thefts, robbing convoys under their charge, &c. &c. I assure you, that the military law is not sufficiently strong to keep them in order. . . . The truth can be never got at from themselves, and perjury is as common as robbery and murder.”

In another letter* to Mr. Villiers, the following passages occur:—

“ I have no objection to communicate to you the return of the army, or to say that, in its present state, it is not sufficient for the defence of Portugal; but the troops are recovering their health daily—the reinforcements from England are expected—and if I can bring 30,000 effective British troops into the field, I will fight a good battle for the possession of Portugal, and see whether that country cannot be saved from the general wreck.

* * * * *

“ I think that if the Spanish armies had not been lost, and if the Spaniards had made good use of their time, very large reinforcements indeed would have been necessary to enable the French even to attack us. As it is, have we now no chance? Ought we to withdraw from the Peninsula, and give up the whole (for when we withdraw we will give up the whole) an easy prey to the conqueror? . . . I conceive that the honour and interests of the country require that we should hold our ground here as long

* Dated Viseu, 14th January, 1810.

as possible,—and, please God, I will maintain it as long as I can; and I will neither endeavour to shift from my own shoulders on those of ministers the responsibility for the failure, by calling for means which I know they cannot give, and which, perhaps, would not add materially to the facility of attaining our object; nor will I give to the ministers, who are not strong, and who must feel the delicacy of their own situation, an excuse for withdrawing an army from a position which, in my opinion, the honour and interest of the country require they should maintain as long as possible.

“I think that if the Portuguese do their duty, I shall have enough to maintain it: if they do not, nothing that Great Britain can afford can save the country: and if from that cause I fail in saving it, and am obliged to go, I shall be able to carry away the British army.”

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The determination of Lord Wellington to combat every embarrassment, and carry out the objects he had advocated, will appear the more remarkable, when it is recollected that at this time it was universally expected that his friends must retire from office, and give place to a cabinet bitterly and avowedly opposed to him. In a subsequent letter, he expresses his full conviction that with the retention of Portugal his own character was deeply committed; but even with a hostile administration, he declares his resolution of maintaining the country to the last; and, regardless of a fearful responsibility, act on his own opinions and abide the issue of the contest. The following passages from a despatch to Lord Liverpool* are very characteristic:—

“It appears to me to be most probable that, in a short time, there will be no resistance to the French troops in any part of Spain, excepting at Cadiz, and in any other of the forts and strongholds which may be able to hold out. . . . Every view I have taken of the British interest, in the

* Dated Viseu, 1st March, 1810.

contest in the Peninsula, has convinced me that the British army should remain in the field in Portugal as long as it may be practicable, and consistent with its safety.

“If we should withdraw from Portugal to go to Cadiz, in the first place, I do not think it quite clear that we should be received there, or that even the best friends of the British alliance would wish to receive us. In the next place, as soon as we shall withdraw from Portugal, the enemy will seize Lisbon on the next day; the fort of Ciudad Rodrigo cannot hold out for a moment; Badajoz will not hold out long; and the reduction of these two would give the means of taking Elvas and Almeida, which could not be expected to hold out long after we had withdrawn. . . . I consider it highly desirable, therefore, that we should maintain ourselves in Portugal as long as possible.

* * * * *

“In respect to home politics, I acknowledge I do not like them much, and I am convinced that the government cannot last. . . . I assure you that what has passed in Parliament respecting me, has not given me one moment’s concern, as far as I am personally concerned; and indeed I rejoice at it, as it has given my friends an opportunity of setting the public right upon some points on which they had not been informed,—and on others, on which the misrepresentations had driven the truth from their memories. But I regret that men like Lord ——— and others, should carry the spirit of party so far as to attack an officer in his absence,—should take the ground of their attack from Cobbett and the *Moniteur*,—and should at once blame him for circumstances and events over which he could have no control,—and for faults which, if they were committed at all, were not committed by him.”

With so much at home to disquiet him, the progress of Peninsular occurrences was any thing but cheering to Lord Wellington. In the east of Spain, the invaders had been steadily and successfully resisted; and the strong-holds of

Catalonia occupied a large proportion of the French army, and caused them a serious delay. The results of Spanish efforts in the field, as we have shown already, had generally proved disastrous, while cities occasionally maintained themselves with a chivalrous devotion, rarely equalled, and never surpassed, in the records of ancient and modern warfare. By its defences, Zaragoza had obtained immortal honour, and Gerona, if possible, exceeded that glorious example. On the 8th of May, 1809, the French commenced the investment—and on the 29th of December the tidings of its surrender reached the British camp.

The story of that memorable siege would fill a history; and the sufferings and endurance of the inhabitants of Gerona may, in a few centuries hence, be considered more akin to romance, than as belonging to actual reality. Inspired by the success which had attended two previous trials, the Geronians “took the cross,” and swore that they would resist to the uttermost,—while woman forgot her fears, and emulated in daring, while she exceeded in determination, that sex which heretofore she had been told was born to sustain her weakness. A deep religious feeling was mingled with hatred, deadly and immitigable; and while the besiegers ridiculed that devotion which brought women to the breach, and confided the care of a beleaguered city to supernatural agencies,* they were taught,

* “Like the crusaders of old, the inhabitants took the cross, and formed eight companies of an hundred men each; the women also, maids and matrons alike, enrolled themselves in an association, which they called the Company of St. Barbara, to perform whatever duties lay within their power, as their countrywomen had done at Zaragoza.” On St. Narcis the honour of the command of Gerona and the whole principality was conferred, and he was nominated Generalissimo of the Spanish forces, by land and sea. After his rapid promotion, “on the following Sunday the Junta, with all the clergy and other persons of distinction, went in procession, to notify this appointment to the saint in his shrine, in the church of St. Felix. The shrine was opened, and a general’s staff, a sword, and a belt, all richly ornamented, were deposited by the relics of the chosen commander; and the enthusiastic joy which the

by fatal experience, that to the enthusiasm of a superstitious people once roused, no sacrifice is too great, no sufferings past endurance.

The conduct of the siege was entrusted, in the commencement to Generals Reille and Verdier, afterwards, to Gouvain St. Cyr, and finally, to Marshal Augereau. Art and perseverance marked the conduct of the assailants—obstinacy, and contempt of hunger, sickness, and suffering, characterized the exertions of the besieged. When the castle of Monjuic was literally a heap of ruins, the remnant of the garrison retired into the town, not carrying provisions, but loaded with grenades and cartridges. Famine came on—disease frightfully increased; but it was death even to name the word “capitulation.” Three practicable breaches were open, and each wide enough for forty men to mount abreast. They were repeatedly assaulted, and on one occasion, four times in two hours. The French fought hand to hand with the Spaniards; and such was the ferocity displayed, that, “impatient of the time required for reloading their muskets, the defendants caught up stones from the breach, and brained their enemies with these readier weapons.” A partial supply thrown into the city by General O'Donnell for a time enabled the Geronians to hold out; but the relief was too limited to serve beyond temporary purposes,—while Hostalrich, where magazines had been provided for the use of the beleaguered fortress, was seized by a French division under General Pino, the town burned, and the provisions carried off or destroyed.

Famine was now awfully felt, and in consequence, disease became more extended and more malignant. The situation of the inhabitants was hopeless; for the ingenuity and wariness of the besiegers prevented the possibility of succours being introduced. “The Spaniards now died in

ceremony excited was such, that the Spaniards said it seemed as if the glory of the Lord had descended and filled the church, manifesting that their devotion was approved and blessed by Heaven!”—*Southey*.

such numbers, chiefly of dysentery, that the daily deaths were never less than thirty-five, and sometimes amounted to seventy; and the way to the burial-place was never vacant. Augereau straitened the blockade; and, that the garrison might neither follow the example of O'Donnell, nor receive any supplies, however small, he drew his lines closer, stretched cords with bells along the interspaces, and kept watch-dogs at all the posts."*

The sufferings already endured by the inhabitants almost exceed belief, and the official report delivered to Alvarez the governor, by Samaniego, who was at the head of the medical staff, and has left a written record of the siege, told a frightful tale of the horrors which reigned over that brave and devoted city. There did not remain a single building in Gerona which had not been injured by the bombardment; not a house was habitable; the people slept in cellars, and vaults, and holes amid the ruins; and it had not unfrequently happened that the wounded were killed in the hospitals. The streets were broken up, so that the rain-water and the sewers stagnated there; and the pestilential vapours which arose were rendered more noxious by the dead bodies which lay rotting amid the ruins. The siege had now endured seven months; scarcely a woman had become pregnant during that time; the very dogs, before hunger consumed them, had ceased to follow after kind; they did not even fawn upon their masters; the almost incessant thunder of artillery seemed to make them sensible of the state of the city, and the unnatural atmosphere affected them as well as human kind: it even affected vegetation. In the gardens within the walls the fruits withered, and scarcely any vegetable could be raised. Within the last three weeks above five hundred of the garrison had died in the hospitals; a dysentery was raging and spreading; the sick were lying upon the ground, without beds, almost without food; and there was scarcely

* Southey.

fuel to dress the little wheat that remained, and the few horses which were yet unconsumed.

In this wretched state the skeleton of what had been a garrison sallied, were successful for a moment, but in turn were repulsed and driven back. This was a dying effort: unable even to inter the dead—one hundred bodies lying over ground,—naked, coffinless, and putrescent, and the governor under the delirium of a fever, those of the inhabitants that remained accepted honourable terms, and yielded all that was standing of Gerona.

The same honours decreed by the Junta to the garrison of Zaragoza, were conferred upon the defenders of Gerona; and none deserved them better. Even from an enemy, to whom the obstinacy of their resistance was in every respect so injurious, their heroism received its merited admiration; and to the last moment of the siege, many kindly acts* occurred, which were highly creditable to the French army, although their commander afterwards treated Alvarez with unpardonable cruelty, and left him to perish in a dungeon.

Hostalrich next occupied the attention of the French marshal, as its intermediate position obstructed his communications with Barcelona.† The town was in possession of the enemy, but the castle was well garrisoned, and its defenders refused Verdier's summons, and held out ob-

* "The out-sentries frequently made a truce with each other, laid down their arms, and drew near enough to converse; the French soldier would then give his half-starved enemy a draught from his leathern bottle or brandy flask; and when they had drunk and talked together, they returned to their posts.
* * * * *

"While the capitulation was going on, many of the enemy's soldiers came to the walls, bringing provisions and wine, to be drawn up by strings,—an honourable proof of the temper with which they regarded their brave opponents."—*Southey*.

† "It is situated on high and broken ground, seven leagues from Gerona. The intermediate country is of the wildest character, consisting of mountains covered with pines; the road winds through sundry defiles, so narrow, that in most places the river nearly fills up the way; the pass is so difficult, that in one part it has obtained the name of El Purgatorio; and the outlet is commanded by this fortress."—*Ibid*.

stinately until farther resistance was impracticable. After enduring a four months' siege, the garrison abandoned the ruins which they had defended to the last, and endeavoured to fight their way through the besiegers. In this brave effort a few only succeeded—the greater portion, including Don Julian de Estrada, the heroic governor,* either perished in the attempt, or were made prisoners by the enemy.

The fortresses of Las Medas and Lerida yielded, after a display of resistance, which, from its want of vigour, induced a suspicion that treachery, rather than necessity had occasioned their surrender. Still these successes poorly compensated, as Napoleon thought, for an immense loss of life, and the constant employment of fifty thousand men; and consequently, like his predecessor, St. Cyr, Augereau incurred the displeasure of the emperor, and was soon afterwards recalled, and superseded in his command by the Duke of Tarentum.

Meantime, the storm which had been long gathering, was about to burst in all its fury. Napoleon had already put an immense force in motion. One hundred and twenty thousand men of the army of the Rhine had crossed the Pyrenees; 20,000 of the imperial guard were marching on the Bidassoa; a corps of Poles and Italians had entered Catalonia, and a powerful siege-train, and nearly 800 carriages with stores and ammunition, were moving by the Burgos road. The grand total of the French army actually within the Pyrenees, amounted to 365,000 men. From the *élite* of this enormous force, two grand armies were formed, each comprising three distinct corps. The first, under the command of the Duke of Dalmatia, was composed of the corps of Victor, Mortier, and Sebastiani, with a reserve under General Dessoles. The second comprised the corps of Ney, Junot, and part of Victor's, and was

* Estrada was placed in close confinement in Figueras, where he died; and from this cruel treatment, the Spaniards asserted that a man whom Napoleon feared to put openly to death had been removed secretly by poison.

especially intended to be employed by the Prince of Esling. The first *corps d'armée*, collected at the foot of the Sierra Morena, mustered 65,000 men, and was intended to overrun Andalusia. The second, concentrated in the valley of the Tagus, amounted to 80,000 effective soldiers, and was destined to reduce Ciudad Rodrigo in the onset, and finally to expel the English from Portugal, and thus achieve the conquest of the Peninsula.

On the 20th of January, the French army, nominally commanded by Joseph Buonaparte, crossed the Sierra Morena nearly unopposed, and united at Carolina on the southern side. The passes, by which they forced a barrier that was considered impenetrable, might have been held by a few battalions; but, as usual, the Spaniards were wanting to themselves. The Puerto del Rey was carried by Dessoles at the first charge; and the Despinas Perros was immediately abandoned, when the light troops of Gazan were seen extending right and left, and commencing an ascent of the mountain. Sebastiani was equally successful. By Villa Nueva de los Infantes he effected an easy passage, and thus gained the upper valley of the Guadalquivir.

Soult marched rapidly on Cordova and Seville; Sebastiani on Jaen and Granada. Jaen, which had boasted of its preparations for defence, where six and forty pieces of cannon had been mounted, and military stores laid in to resist a siege, "submitted as tamely as the most defenceless village. Granada, also, where a crusade had been preached, was entered without resistance." Pressing on, Sebastiani overcame the desultory resistance he received from peasants led on by priests; for Ariezega had been a second time defeated, and the remnant of an army, already beaten, was once more totally disbanded.

Sebastiani's success having secured the left flank of the French armies, the right and centre, under Joseph, marched upon Cordova, where they were received without an indication of hostility. This circumstance is the more remarkable, as the town had actually seven thousand troops

within its walls; and the people were anxious to resist—but leaders were wanting; and a city, having a fine cannon foundry, and “immense arsenals,” fell without a blow. The inhabitants of Seville yielded their city on the 31st, and on the 1st of February, Joseph Buonaparte entered it at the head of his guards.

To Sebastiani, Malaga offered a bold but ineffectual resistance. The charges of Milhaud's heavy cavalry were not to be repelled by the armed townsmen who attempted its defence; and Malaga shared the fate of the other places which had already submitted without a struggle.

But one conquest was required to end the tale of Peninsular resistance. Cadiz was unprovided for an attack—for on the Isla de Leon there was not a thousand men; nor were the works even in a condition to resist, had there been a sufficiency of troops to man them. The Junta, to avoid the consequences a popular ferment had produced, fled from Seville to that city, having, by their expiring efforts, done all within their power to conclude the ruin of the kingdom. Albuquerque had been kept inoperative; for the orders he received in the morning were countermanded before noon; and the contradictory views of the Junta paralyzed his exertions, while they were fatal presages of their own approaching dissolution.

Convinced, however, that with the passage of the Morena, the fate of Seville was sealed, Albuquerque saw that the last chance of Spain lay in the preservation of Cadiz—and taking a serious responsibility on himself, with a part of his corps, amounting to 8000 infantry, and 500 horse, he marched to the relief of the only hope of Spain—Cadiz.*

* “The people of Cadiz were relieved by an express from him, saying, that he was between them and the French, and should reach the city in time to save it. The following morning he arrived at Xerez, having gained a day's march upon the enemy: they found themselves outstripped in rapidity, and outmanœuvred; and, on the morning of the 2d of February, Albuquerque, with his 8000 men, entered the Isle of Leon, having accomplished a march of sixty-five leagues, 260 English miles. Thus Cadiz was saved.”—*Southey*.

On this occasion the French forfeited their high reputation for marching. Albuquerque, by an extraordinary effort, reached Cadiz on the evening of the 2d of February, and broke down the Zuazo bridge, which crosses the canal and divides the Isla de Leon from the continent. The struggle to gain the city was a close one; for Victor's advanced guard had already appeared at Chiclana, and on the next morning his columns had come up, and occupied the Andalusian side of the canal.

What will not an hour or two effect in war! Albuquerque had scarcely entered the city, when volunteers flocked in, deserters rejoined their colours, and in three days his force exceeded 13,000 fighting men; and that force was confirmed in its determination to resist by the opportune arrival of 5000 Anglo-Portuguese troops. A British squadron was riding in the bay—England had sent assurances of further support—and thus encouraged, Cadiz determined to hold out, and her defence was what a gallant one deserved to be—successful.



CHAPTER X.

ALLIES TAKE UP A NEW LINE—THE LIGHT DIVISION POSTED ON THE COA—AFFAIR AT BARBA DE PUERCO—MASSENA APPOINTED TO COMMAND THE ARMY OF PORTUGAL—FRENCH MOVEMENTS—CIUDAD RODRIGO—CITY BESIEGED—GUERRILLAS—THEIR RISE AND CHARACTER—THEIR LEADERS—ANECDOTES—THE EMPECINADO—THE MINAS, THE CHALECO, JULIAN SANCHEZ—RODRIGO BREACHED AND SUMMONED—PAINFUL POSITION OF LORD WELLINGTON—HERASTI SURRENDERS—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—ESCAPE OF JULIAN SANCHEZ.

WHILE the rapid movements of the Spanish Duke had enabled him to seize the Isla de Leon,* and secure the important city which so entirely depended upon its possession, Romana, with sound judgment, threw into Badajoz a garrison of sufficient strength to render unavailing any sudden effort the enemy might make to obtain it. Wellington, with his usual quickness, had foreseen the quarter

* “The Isle of Leon forms an irregular triangle, of which the longest side is separated from the main land by a channel, called the river of Santi Petri, ten miles in length, and navigable for the largest ships. This side is strongly fortified; and the situation, also, is peculiarly strong. The bridge of Zuazo, built originally by the Romans over the channel, is flanked with batteries, and communicates with the continent by a causeway over impassable marshes. Cadiz stands on the end of a tongue of land seven miles in length, extending from the isle into the bay; this isthmus is from a quarter to half a mile broad, flanked on one side by the sea, and on the other by the Bay of Cadiz. Along this isthmus, an enemy, who had made himself master of the island, must pass. New batteries had been formed; new works thrown up, and mines dug; and if these obstacles were overcome, his progress would then be opposed by regular fortifications, upon which the utmost care and expense had been bestowed for rendering the city impregnable.”—*Southey*.

upon which the French would direct their operations ; and from the positions of their corps, as well as from the general outline of the country, he concluded that by the north of Beira and the Alemtejo, they would attempt an entrance into Portugal. If their attacks should be made upon these points, they must, as a necessary precaution, reduce Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, before they could hazard an advance upon either Lisbon or Oporto. With such convictions, Lord Wellington took up a line best suited to defend the frontier. It “ formed the segment of a circle, of which the convex part was opposed to the quarter from whence the invasion was expected. Guardo, Celerico, Pinhel, and the west bank of the Coa,* were its four main points ; the Coa, with its tributary streams, flowing in front of the line along the greater part of its extent.”†

The British army, organized into six divisions, of which one was cavalry, occupied the following positions ;—

		Men.	
1st Division	General Spencer	6000	Viseu.
2d do (13th drag. included)	Hill	5000	Abrantes.
3d do	Picton	3000	Celerico.
4th do.	Cole	4000	Guarda.
Lightd.	Robert Craufurd	2500	Pinhel.
Cavalry do.	Cotton.	3000	{ Valley of the Mondego.

The fortresses of Almeida, Elvas, and Valenca, Peniche, Abrantes, and Setuval, were garrisoned by the Portuguese regulars and militia. Bacellar held the provinces beyond the Douro, with native troops. The country between Penamacor and the Tagus was similarly defended. Four regiments of militia occupied the Alemtejo ; three garrisoned the fortresses of the Algarves ; while twelve remained in

* The Coa rises in the Sierra da Gata, enters Portugal at Folgozinho, and, receiving many lesser streams, unites with the Douro at Villa Nova de Foscoa. “ Its waters are supposed to be excellent for dying wool, and tempering steel, but unwholesome.”

† Southey.

reserve, quartered upon both banks of the Tagus, and chiefly about Setuval.

By this masterly arrangement, the extremes of the defensive line were entrusted to the militia and ordenanza, while the whole of the regular troops occupied the central positions; thus enabling Lord Wellington, in two marches, to concentrate 40,000 splendid soldiers, either at Guarda, or between that place and the Douro.*

The allied brigades remained undisturbed in their respective cantonments until the early part of March, with the exception of the 2d and light divisions. General Hill had been left upon the southern side of the Tagus, to preserve Lord Wellington's communications with Romana, who had thrown part of his corps into Badajoz. Mortier, with Regnier's corps, was in the neighbourhood of Merida, with twenty thousand men, and occasionally assumed a threatening attitude, as if he intended an attack upon the fortress. "The French marshal, whenever the humour took him, would advance, as if with the design of investing Badajoz—certain that, by so doing, he would draw Hill from his quarters; whilst Hill no sooner showed himself, than Mortier would again retire, and take up his former positions."†

But the light division was far more dangerously posted. Following the example of Mortier, Ney menaced Ciudad Rodrigo, and obliged Lord Wellington to strengthen that part of the line extending between Pinhel and Guarda, and push Craufurd with his division across the Coa, to observe the movements of the enemy. The 3d division was brought forward to Pinhel, and Craufurd was rein-

* "It occupied all this while the position of Guarda, of which Lord Galway has spoken, as presenting the only defensible line between Lisbon and the frontier; and though Lord Galway lived in an age when the military science had not arrived at the perfection which it has since attained, he cannot be said to have greatly overrated the excellence of that line."—*Lord Londonerry's Narrative.*

† *Ibid.*

forced with the 1st German hussars, a troop of horse artillery, and two battalions of Caçadores.* The whole outpost duty along the Agueda, from Escalhon on the left, to Navas Frias on the right, was confided to the light division—and Cole and Picton were desired to support it.

Although it was a difficult duty, with a force not exceeding four thousand men, to secure an advanced line covering a distance of five-and-twenty miles, Craufurd's masterly arrangements enabled him to effect it. The Agueda was his chief dependance,—and when the stream was full, the light division was tolerably safe; but the height of the river was variable, and without any visible cause it would suddenly fall several feet within a few hours, and thus, in many places, become fordable. At night, Craufurd "withdrew his outposts, and concentrated his division; and his situation demanded a quickness and intelligence in the troops, the like of which has never been surpassed. Seven minutes sufficed for the division to get under arms in the middle of the night, and a quarter of an hour, night or day, to bring it in order of battle to the alarm posts, with the baggage loaded and assembled at a convenient distance in the rear;—and this not upon a concerted signal, or as a trial, but at all times, and certain."†

The light division did not remain long unmolested. On the night of the 19th of March, when the moon was just rising, a chosen body of picked grenadiers advanced so silently to the bridge of San Felices, that they passed it unchallenged, having surprised and killed the sentries. The attack was so sudden, that the picket, in falling back, was mixed pell-mell with the assailants, and both went fighting into the village of Barba del Puerco. But though the surprise was complete, the rifles rallied in a moment, and joined by their comrades who poured out of the houses, they instantly assaulted, hand to hand, the enemy they found next. The French were bayoneted from the

* Portuguese Light Infantry.

† Napier.

village, leaving behind them a larger loss in killed and wounded than they had themselves inflicted.

At this period, Massena's appointment to the command of the army destined for the conquest of Portugal was officially communicated. The report had been rife for months, that Napoleon himself, would "drive the leopard to the sea,"—but other objects engrossed him. Wearied with the disputes and jealousies which had distracted his lieutenants, the French emperor selected one superior to them all, both in rank and character. "No general in the French service had enjoyed so high a reputation since Hoche, and Pichegru, and Moreau, had disappeared; Buonaparte, in his first campaigns, called him, in his own inflated language, 'the favourite child of Victory,' and after the late Austrian war, created him Prince of Essling, because his skill and exertions had contributed mainly to the escape of the French from utter destruction, at the battle of Aspern."* With increased powers, Massena assumed his new command, "and, as Soult had done before him, it is believed that he went to make the conquest of Portugal, expecting to be rewarded with its crown for his success."† Such was the adversary to whom Wellington was opposed—the victor in an hundred fields, and who, among the best soldiers of the age, might then have fearlessly appended the motto to his name, of "*nulli secundus*."

Massena's appointment seemed to be the signal for hostilities to commence. On the 25th of April, a French corps encamped on the Pedro Toro, a height three miles eastward of Rodrigo. On the 30th, a second division bivouacked a league to the north, on the Valde Carras, and a third division took ground between them. In the middle of May, a fourth division encamped on Monte de Ibaurey, to the westward; and on the 4th of June, Rodrigo was regularly invested.

* Southey.

† Ibid.

“Ciudad Rodrigo is built on a rising ground, on the right bank of the Agueda, and has a double enceinte all round it. The interior wall is of an old construction, of the height of thirty-two feet, and is generally of bad masonry, without flanks, and with weak parapets and narrow ramparts. The exterior enclosure is a modern *fausse-braie*, of a low profile, constructed so far down the slope of the hill as to afford but little cover to the interior wall; and from the same defect of the rapid descent of the hill, the *fausse-braie* itself is very imperfectly covered by its *glacis*. On the eastern and southern sides there are ravelins to the *fausse-braie*, but in no part is there a covered-way, nor are there any countermines. Without the town, at the distance of three hundred yards, the suburbs were enclosed by a bad earthen entrenchment, hastily thrown up. The ground without the place is generally flat, and the soil rocky, except on the north side, where there are two hills called the upper and the lower Teson: the one at 180 yards from the works rises nearly to the level of the ramparts, and the other at 600 yards distance, to the height of thirteen feet above them. The soil on these hills is very stony, and during open weather in winter, water rises at the depth of six inches below the surface.”*

All doubt that Rodrigo was to be regularly besieged ended, when, on the 1st of June, Ney threw a trestle bridge over the Agueda, at Caridad—and, on the 5th, another across the river at Carboneras. With a garrison of 5000 men, and a population of about the same extent, Andres Herrasti prepared to hold out; and the defence which the old man made, proved him “every inch” a soldier.

No fortress was better defended, and none more furiously assailed—Ney “beginning his approaches, where a general more sparing of his army would have terminated them.” But this reckless expenditure of human life proved

* Jones's Journal of the Sieges.

unavailing; and when Massena, on the 24th of June, assumed the command of "the grand army of Portugal," he found, by dear-bought experience, that the mode of attack hitherto adopted must be changed, and recourse had to the slower, but more certain operations, which Ney in his ardour had overlooked.

Nor was the city closely approached without the assailants being exposed to considerable annoyance. The English general was within a march—a stern old soldier held the fortress—and one of those dangerous bodies, which had risen on the ruins of the Spanish armies, had thrown itself into the place, and during the progress of the investment, kept the besiegers in constant alarm, and occasioned them a heavy loss.

At this period of the war, the Guerillas, from being confined to some straggling bands of peasantry and smugglers, named *Quadrillas*, had increased considerably in numbers, and become equally formidable from their incessant activity, and the boldness of their exploits. Every Spanish army that was defeated, added its best soldiers to the ranks of the *Partidas*; and while the more peaceful of the peasantry gladly returned to their homes, the more daring and determined naturally selected a life of wild and desperate adventure. As the wars of the Revolution opened a field for the display of military talent, and produced those inimitable soldiers whose victories obtained a martial reputation for France which stands in the records of nations without a parallel—so, as the regular armies of Spain disappeared, another and more formidable force sprang rapidly into existence; and names, which otherwise would have lived and died unknown, acquired a celebrity for courage or cruelty, or for both.

"There was in the whole system of guerilla warfare a wild and romantic character, which, could its ferocity have been overlooked, would have rendered it both chivalrous and exciting; and men, unfitted by previous habits and education, suddenly appeared upon the stage, and deve-

loped talent and determination, that made them the scourge and terror of the invaders.

“ But theirs was a combat of extermination. None of those courtesies, which render modern warfare endurable, were granted to their opponents; the deadliest hostility was unmitigated by success; and, when vanquished, expecting no quarter from the French, they never thought of extending it to those who unfortunately became their prisoners. A sanguinary contest raged, and ‘*væ victis*’ seemed, with ‘war to the knife,’ to be the only mottos of the Guerillas.

“ The strange exploits of many of these daring partisans, though true to the letter, are perfectly romantic; and the patient endurance and deep artifice with which their objects were effected, appear to be almost incredible. Persons, whose ages and professions were best calculated to evade suspicion, were invariably the chosen agents. The village priest was commonly a confederate of the neighbouring guerilla; the postmaster betrayed the intelligence that reached him in his office; the fairest peasant of Estremadura would tempt the thoughtless soldier with her beauty, and decoy him within range of the bullet; and even childhood was frequently and successfully employed, in leading the unsuspecting victim into some pass or ambuscade, where the knife or musket closed his earthly career.*

“ In every community, however fierce and lawless, different gradations of good and evil will be discovered, and nothing could be more opposite than the feelings and actions of some of the guerillas and their leaders.

“ Many of these desperate bands were actuated in every enterprise by a love of bloodshed and spoliation; and their

* “ Many of the Guerilla leaders were accompanied in the field by females, who, as is not unfrequent in camps, wore male attire. These, after a time, habituated to danger, became very daring, frequently fighting amongst the foremost; on which circumstance most of the tales of the bands, being commanded by Amazons, had their origin.”—*Jones's Account of the War.*

own countrymen suffered as heavily from their rapacity, as their enemies from their swords. Others took the field from nobler motives; an enthusiastic attachment to their country and religion roused them to vengeance against a tyranny which had now become insufferable; every feeling but ardent patriotism was forgotten—private and dearer ties were snapped asunder—homes, and wives, and children, were abandoned—privations, that appear almost incredible, were patiently endured, until treachery delivered them to the executioner—or in some wild attempt they were overpowered by numbers, and died resisting to the last.”*

“ If the invading troops were treated with a ferocity which no circumstances could justify, the vengeance of the Guerillas against domestic treachery, was neither less certain, nor less severe. To collect money or supplies for the invaders, convey any information, conceal their motions, and not betray them when opportunity occurred, was certain death to the offender. A secret correspondence between the wife of the Alcalde of Berhueda and the French general in the next command, having been detected by an intercepted despatch, the wretched woman, by order of Juan Martin Diez, “ the Empecinado,”† was dragged by a guerilla party from her house, her hair shaven, her denuded person tarred and feathered, and disgracefully exhibited in the public market-place; and she was then put to death amid the execrations of her tormentors. Nor was there any security for a traitor; even were his residence in the capital, or almost within the camp of the enemy. One of the favourites of Joseph Buonaparte, Don José Riego, was torn from his home in the suburbs of Madrid while celebrating his wedding, by the Empecinado, and hanged in the square of Cadiz. The usurper himself, on

* The Bivouac.

† It is said that he acquired this *sobriquet* from having, upon finding his family murdered by the French, smeared his face with pitch, (*pecina*,) and made a vow of vengeance.

two occasions, narrowly escaped from this desperate partisan. Dining at Almeida, some two leagues distance from the capital, with one of the generals of division, their hilarity was suddenly interrupted by the unwelcome intelligence that the Empecinado was at hand, and nothing but a hasty retreat preserved the king from capture. On another occasion, he was surprised upon the Guadalaxara road; and so unexpected was the guerilla movement, so determined the pursuit, that before the French could be succoured by the garrison of Madrid, forty of the royal escort were sabred between Torrejon and El Molar.

“A war of extermination raged, and on both sides blood flowed in torrents. One act of cruelty was as promptly answered by another; and a French decree, ordering that every Spaniard taken in arms should be executed, appeared to be a signal for the guerillas to exclude from mercy every enemy who fell into their hands. The French had shown the example; the Junta were denounced, their houses burned, and their wives and children driven to the woods. If prisoners received quarter in the field—if they fell lame upon the march, or the remotest chance of a rescue appeared, they were shot like dogs. Others were butchered in the towns, their bodies left rotting on the highways, and their heads exhibited on poles. That respect, which even the most depraved of men usually pay to female honour, was shamefully disregarded; and more than one Spaniard, like the postmaster of Medina, was driven to the most desperate courses, by the violation of a wife, and the murder of a child.”*

It would be sickening to describe the horrid scenes which mutual retaliation produced. Several of the Empecinado's followers, who were surprised in the mountains of Guadarama, were nailed to the trees, and left there to expire slowly by hunger and thirst. To the same trees, before a week elapsed, a similar number of French soldiers were affixed by the guerillas. Two of the inhabitants of Madrid,

* Southey.

who were suspected of communicating with the brigands, as the French termed the armed Spaniards, were tried by court-martial, and executed at their own door. The next morning, six of the garrison were seen hanging from walls beside the high road. Some females, related to Palarea, surnamed the Medico, had been abused most scandalously by the escort of a convoy, who had seized them in a wood; and, in return, the guerilla chief drove into a chapel eighty Frenchmen and their officers, set fire to the thatch, and burned them to death, or shot them in their endeavours to leave the blazing house. Such were the dreadful enormities a system of retaliation caused."*

These desperate adventurers were commanded by men of the most dissimilar professions. All were distinguished by some *soubriquet*, and these were of the most opposite descriptions. Among the leaders were friars and physicians, cooks and artisans; while some were characterized by a deformity, and others named after the form of their waistcoat or hat. Worse epithets described many of the minor chiefs; truculence and spoliation obtained them titles; and, strange as it may appear, the most ferocious band that infested Biscay was commanded by a woman, named Martina. So indiscriminating and unrelenting was this female monster in her murders of friends and foes, that Mina was obliged to direct a force against her. She was surprised, with the greater part of her banditti, and the whole were shot upon the spot.

Of all the guerilla leaders, the two Minas were the most remarkable for their daring, their talents, and their successes. The younger, Xavier, had a short career; but nothing could be more chivalrous and romantic than many of the incidents that marked it. His band amounted to a thousand—and with this force he kept Navarre, Biscay, and Aragon in confusion; intercepted convoys, levied contributions, plundered the custom-houses, and harassed the enemy incessantly. The villages were obliged to furnish

* Victories of the British Armies.

rations for his troops, and the French convoys supplied him with money and ammunition. His escapes were often marvellous. He swam flooded rivers deemed impassable, and climbed precipices hitherto untraversed by a human foot. Near Estella, he was forced by numbers to take refuge on a lofty rock ; the only accessible side he defended till night-fall, when, lowering himself and followers by a rope, he brought his party off without the loss of a man.

“ This was among his last exploits ; for, when reconnoitring by moonlight, in the hope of capturing a valuable convoy, he fell unexpectedly into the hands of an enemy’s patrol. Proscribed by the French as a bandit, it was surprising that his life was spared ; but his loss to the guerillas was regarded as a great misfortune.

“ Mina’s uncle was chosen to succeed him. Educated as a husbandman, and scarcely able to read or write, the new leader had lived in great retirement, until the Junta’s call to arms induced him to join his nephew’s band.* He reluctantly acceded to the general wish to become Xavier’s successor ; but when he assumed the command, his firm and daring character was rapidly developed. Echeverria, with a strong following, had started as a rival chief ; but Mina surprised him, put to death three of his subordinates, with their leader, and united the remainder of the band with his own.

“ An example of severity like this, gave confidence to his own followers, and exacted submission from the peasantry. Every where Mina had a faithful spy—every movement of the enemy was reported—and if a village magistrate received a requisition from a French commandant, it was communicated to the guerilla chief with due despatch, or woe to the alcade who neglected it.

“ Nature had formed Mina for the service to which he had devoted himself. His constitution was equal to every privation and fatigue ; and his courage was of that prompt and daring character, which no circumstance, however sud-

* Life of Mina.

den and disheartening, could overcome. Careless as to dress or food, he depended for a change of linen on the capture of French baggage, or any accidental supply; and for days he could subsist on a few biscuits, or any thing chance threw in his way. He guarded carefully against surprise—slept with a dagger and pistols in his girdle—and such were his active habits, that he rarely took more than two hours of repose.* Remote caverns were the depositories of his ammunition and plunder; and in a mountain-fastness he established an hospital for his wounded, to which they were carried on litters across the heights, and placed in perfect safety until their cure could be completed. Gaming and plunder were prohibited, and even love forbidden, lest the guerilla might be too communicative to the object of his affection, and any of his chieftain's secrets should thus transpire.

“Of the minor chiefs many strange and chivalrous adventures are on record. The daring plans, often tried and generally successful, and the hair-breadth escapes of several, are almost beyond belief. No means, however repugnant to the laws of modern warfare, were unemployed; while the ingenuity with which intelligence of a hostile movement was transmitted—the artifice with which an enemy was delayed, until he could be surrounded, or surprised, appear incredible. Of individual ferocity, a few instances will be sufficient. At the execution of an alcade and his son, at Mondragon, the old man boasted that two hundred French had perished by their hands; and the Chaleco, Francis Moreno, in a record of his services, boasts of his having waited for a cavalry patrol in a ravine, and by the discharge of a huge blunderbuss loaded nearly to the muzzle, dislocated his own shoulder, and killed or wounded nine of the French. The same chief presented to Villafraanca a rich booty of plate and quicksilver, and enhanced the value of the gift with a quantity of ears cut from the prisoners whom on that occasion he had slaughtered.”†

* Life of Mina.

† Victories of the British army.

Of those daring adventurers, one, distinguished for enterprise and talent above the rest, had hastened to assist in the defence of Ciudad Rodrigo—and, in Julian Sanchez, Herrasti found an able auxiliary, and one whose spirit was congenial to his own.

Sanchez was a man of humble birth, and previous to the invasion of the French, cultivated a farm on the banks of the Guebra. One of those atrocities, too common at the time, however, changed the husbandman into the soldier. His parents and sister had been murdered by some French foragers, and Julian swore eternal vengeance, and headed a guerilla band.

On the 25th, the French batteries, armed with forty-six pieces of siege artillery, opened, and maintained an unabated fire until the evening of the 28th, when the breach being twenty-five yards long, and deemed practicable, Ney sent in a summons, desiring Herrasti to choose “between an honourable capitulation, and the terrible vengeance of a victorious army;” but the old governor returned a firm refusal.

During these occurrences, no general was ever more painfully circumstanced than Lord Wellington. The salvos from Massena’s guns sounded in the British camp, and the musketry was heard distinctly at the outposts. The city held nobly out. The spirit of the Catalans pervaded the inhabitants of Rodrigo; and sexual weakness and bodily infirmity were forgotten, when duty made a call.* To succour the besieged was, with Lord Wellington, the object next his heart. One march would bring him to the city—and all expected that the attempt would be made. “The troops desired the enterprise—the Spaniards demanded it

* “The women and children, when they saw their houses burning, gave way neither to fear nor lamentation, but exerted themselves to quench the flames, and carried refreshment and ammunition to the troops amid the hottest fire. There were two blind beggars in the city; no one supposed that these unfortunate men could render any service during the siege, but zeal taught them how to be serviceable; they carried water to the walls by day, and ammunition by night, with unwearied activity.”—*Southey*.

as a proof of good faith—the Portuguese, to keep the war away from their own country.” Romana came specially from Badajoz to urge its necessity, and offer his cooperation. Massena, in his proclamations, taxed his opponent with timidity, and accused him of breach of honour and good faith, in allowing his ally’s fortresses to fall, “without risking a shot to save them.” Nothing, however, could shake the determination of the English general. Views and objects which none could penetrate occupied his thoughts. The course that others urged, he saw was madness. He might succeed in bringing off a raw garrison at the expense of twice their number of good soldiers, and the result would be the loss of Portugal. Stern in his purpose, Wellington remained inflexible; and to his resolution not to stand the issue of a battle, the downfall of Napoleon’s dynasty may be traced.

The fate of Rodrigo was sealed; but the city held out until the 11th, when the counterscarp having been blown in, and a breach formed, over which carriages might have passed, and the French columns formed, and only awaiting the signal to assault, Herasti hoisted the white flag and surrendered. Lord Wellington communicated the loss of the fortress to Lord Liverpool, in a despatch dated from Alverca, 11th July, 1810.

“Since I wrote to your Lordship this day, I have received a report that Ciudad Rodrigo surrendered to the enemy yesterday evening.

“There was a large practicable breach in the place, and the enemy had made all the preparations for a storm; when, Marshal Ney having offered terms of capitulation, the garrison surrendered.

“The enemy took up their ground before this place on the 26th of April; they invested it completely on the 11th of June; broke ground before it on the 15th of June, and opened their fire upon it on the 24th of June: and, advert-ing to the nature and position of the place, to the deficiency and defects of its works, to the advantages which the enemy

had in their attack upon it, and to the numbers and formidable equipments by which it was attacked, I consider the defence of Ciudad Rodrigo to have been most honourable to the governor, Don Andres Herasti, and its garrison; and to have been equally creditable to the arms of Spain, with the celebrated defence of other places, by which this nation has been illustrated during the existing contest for its independence.

“ I have been most anxiously desirous to relieve the place since it has been attacked; and have been prevented from attempting its relief only by the certainty which I had that the attempt must fail; and that the immediate fall of the place, and the irrevocable loss of the cause of the allies would be the consequence of the failure.

“ I had intelligence, of the truth of which I could entertain no doubt, that the enemy had collected in the neighbourhood of Ciudad Rodrigo, for the purpose of the siege, the whole of the 6th and of the 8th corps of the army in Spain; the former consisting of 31,611 effectives, including 4,856 cavalry; the latter consisting of 25,956 effectives, including 4,716 cavalry, according to returns of those corps, of a very late period, which had been intercepted and communicated to me. There were besides other troops employed in the communications with the rear, and with the right of the enemy's army. The country in which I must have carried on the operations to raise the siege, or even to relieve the place, would have been highly advantageous to the enemy, on account of his superiority in cavalry.

“ Under these circumstances, however much I have been interested in the fate of this place, not only on account of its military and political importance, but on account of its brave governor, and garrison, and inhabitants, I have considered it my duty to refrain from an operation which it was probable would be attended by the most disastrous consequences.

“ While the Marques de la Romana was here, I had arranged with him an operation, by which it was hoped that we might save the garrison; but the absolute impossibility

of communicating with the governor, for several days, has prevented its execution."*

When all hope that Rodrigo would be relieved was over, the governor urged Julian Sanchez to attempt an escape, as he might render service in the field, but none within the fortress; and the guerilla chief daringly effected it. The lancers were directed to hold themselves in readiness, and "a little before midnight, Sanchez collected his troops in the Plaza; the two of his company who were married men took their wives behind them; they sallied out, and their leader, in the spirit of Scanderbeg, instead of contenting himself with merely effecting his own retreat, charged a post of cavalry, routed them, and caried away eight prisoners, with their horses. The two women were armed with pistols; and one of them, by name Maria Fraile, saved her husband by shooting a dragoon who was about to attack him on one side."†

* Wellington Despatches.

† Southey.



CHAPTER XI.

CRAUFURD'S BOLD ATTITUDE—FRENCH ADVANCE AND OBLIGE HIM TO RETIRE
—AFFAIR AT VILLA DE PUERCO—LIGHT DIVISION FALL BACK UPON AL-
MEIDA—ACTION OF THE COA—ALMEIDA BESIEGED—MAGAZINE EXPLODES,
AND THE FORTRESS SURRENDERS—SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES OCCASIONED BY
ITS SUDDEN FALL—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—PANIC AT LISBON AND
OPORTO—LETTERS RESPECTING ITS CAUSE—MASSENA ADVANCES—SIERRA
DE BUSACO—SKIRMISH—LORD WELLINGTON TAKES A POSITION ON THE
HEIGHTS OF BUSACO—MISTAKE OF MASSENA IN DELAYING HIS ATTACK.

THERE was a boldness in the attitude taken by Craufurd's division while Rodrigo was invested and besieged, which nothing but a firm dependence in their own discipline and gallantry, could have either prompted or justified. To the very last, the light regiments held their ground, and that too in a country "studded with woods, scooped out into hollows, free for cavalry and artillery to act, with 6,000 horsemen and 50 guns within an hour's march of the position." While the fortress was still holding out, the French pushed their advanced posts forward, until their light troops appeared upon the Azava: consequently Carera retired to the *Duas Casas*, and Craufurd, falling back, placed his cavalry in *Gallegos*, and his infantry in the woods of *Alameda*. An ostentatious display of his division on the 2d of July, in rank entire, produced a reconnaissance and skirmish on the 4th, in which the German Hussars attached to the British rear-guard, behaved with distinguished gallantry.*

* "This rear-guard drew up on a hill half cannon-shot from a streamlet with marshy banks, which crossed the road to *Alameda*; in a few moments a column

Craufurd took up a new position under the guns of Fort Concepcion, while the French retired beyond the Azava, leaving, however, a picket in Gallegos. Their foragers became more troublesome, and every village within reach was visited and plundered. For three successive nights marauding parties had entered Barquillo and Villa de Puerco; and, as a wood was contiguous to these hamlets, it appeared not very difficult to surprise and cut them off. The necessary arrangements were accordingly made—nine squadrons of cavalry, five companies of riflemen, a cacadore battalion, and the horse-artillery were properly disposed during the night of the 10th; and at day-light next morning, two parties of the enemy were discovered, and instant measures taken to cut them off.

“Their force did not exceed 30 cavalry and 200 infantry; but they were advantageously posted in an open space, just beyond a narrow defile; and to reach them, it was necessary to thread that defile in a long line. The consequence was, that though the hussars who led formed up in succession as they got through, and charged their opponents with great gallantry, they effected nothing more than the dispersion of the handful of horse; for the infantry had time to form a square, and not all the efforts of our people could succeed in breaking it. The hussars rode bravely up to the bayonets, but were repulsed by a volley closely thrown in, which killed or wounded upwards of a dozen men. The remainder wheeled off, and pursuing the French cavalry, made way for a squadron of the 16th. These galloped forward, but also took to the left, and, leaving the infantry uninjured, joined in pursuit of the

of French horsemen was observed coming on at a charging pace, diminishing its front as it approached the bridge, but resolute to pass, and preserving the most perfect order, notwithstanding some well-directed shots from the guns. Captain Straüchenberg, of the hussars, proposed to charge. The English officer did not conceive his orders warranted it; and the gallant German rode full speed against the head of the advancing columns with his single troop, and with such a shock, that he killed the leading officers, overthrew the front ranks, and drove the whole back.”—*Napier*.

cavalry. When the last charge was made, the French square was without fire, every man having discharged his piece, and none having been able to load again; but, when a third attempt was made, they were better prepared to receive it. It fell to the lot of Colonel Talbot of the 14th to lead this attack. It was made with daring intrepidity; but the enemy remained perfectly steady, and reserving their fire till the bridles of the horses touched their bayonets, gave it with such effect, that Colonel Talbot, with several of his men, were killed on the spot. The rest drew off; upon which General Craufurd, despairing of success by the exertions of cavalry alone, despatched an orderly to bring up a detachment of the 43d, which chanced to be at no great distance.

“Whilst this was doing, the enemy’s little column began its retreat, which it conducted with singular steadiness and great order. The 14th dragoons, seeing this, prepared to launch another squadron against it; and it was already in speed for the purpose, when Colonel Arenschild, of the hussars, observed cavalry advancing both in front and flank, and checked the movement. It was much to be regretted afterwards that he took this step, for the horse which alarmed him proved to be detachments from our own people on their return from pursuing the enemy’s dragoons, the whole of whom they had captured. The French infantry lost no time in availing themselves of the indecision of our cavalry. They marched on, and returned to their main body, without having lost a single prisoner, or suffered in killed or wounded.”*

Soon after this unfortunate affair, Massena’s cavalry again advanced, and obliged the light division to fall back upon Almeida, after blowing up Fort Conception. Craufurd’s new position was in front of the Coa, and extended for a mile and half obliquely towards the river, having its right resting on some broken ground, and its left within medium range of the guns of Almeida. Nearly a mile in

* Lord Londonderry’s Narrative.

the rear, a long and narrow bridge crossed the stream, the banks on either side being deep, rugged, and precipitous. As a position, none could be more dangerous: for the ground in Craufurd's front was sufficiently open to admit of the rapid movements of an enemy, while that in his rear was broken and enclosed.

At daylight, on the 24th, a dropping fire announced that the pickets were attacked; and when the mists of morning cleared away, the French, with four-fold numbers were seen hemming in the division, and threatening the line at every point.

The irregularity of the ground, and the frequency and height of the enclosures, rendered an orderly retreat almost impracticable; but the operation was boldly and coolly executed. To prevent the French from forcing the bridge, and allow time for the regiments to reform, the 43d and 95th were drawn up in front of the pass, and directed to oppose to the last, every attempt which the French should make to cross it. The enemy seemed equally determined; and having collected an imposing force, a fierce and well-sustained attack produced one of the most desperate and sanguinary encounters that the annals of modern warfare record.

The French assault was made with its proverbial impetuosity; and, as the combatants were closely engaged, the guns of Almeida were slowly and cautiously opened. But the resistance offered, in fierce but desultory combats, was worthy of the light division; and the British, although not without great difficulty, gained and crossed the bridge.

Instantly the left bank of the Coa was filled with British sharp-shooters, and their destructive fire was replied to by a torrent of musketry from the French. The roar of artillery overcame the sharper rattle of the fusilade;—and a deep smoke eddied up the sides of the ravine occasionally lightened by the sparkle of a shell, while the wild cheering of the combatants added to the confusion. The “pas de

charge" rolled sullenly—a column appeared—and, to judge from the imposing determination with which it advanced, it seemed resolved to force a passage. "A drummer and an officer, in a splendid uniform, leaped forward together, and the whole rushed on with loud cries. The depth of the ravine at first deceived the soldiers' aim, and two-thirds of the passage was won ere an English shot had brought down an enemy; yet a few paces onwards the line of death was traced, and the whole of the leading French section fell as one man! Still the gallant column pressed forward, but no foot could pass that terrible line; the killed and wounded rolled together until the heap rose nearly even with the parapet, and the living mass behind melted away rather than give back.

"The shouts of the British now rose loudly, but they were confidently answered, and, in half an hour, a second column, more numerous than the first, again crowded the bridge. This time, however, the range was better judged, and ere half the distance was won, the multitude was again torn, shattered, dispersed and slain; ten or twelve men only succeeded in crossing, and took shelter under the rocks at the brink of the river."*

A second and a third attempt proved equally unavailing, and shewed that the passage was not to be carried—but the French persevered, and the British held the bridge as obstinately.† At last a heavy rain terminated the contest. Craufurd effected his retreat with singular good fortune;—not a gun nor trophy was abandoned to his adversary; and he inflicted upon the assailants a loss three times greater than that which he had himself sustained.

But, in every view, the affair upon the Coa, while creditable to all, was open to military censure, and would

* Napier.

† "The skirmishing was renewed, and a French surgeon, coming down to the very foot of the bridge, waved his handkerchief and commenced dressing the wounded under the hottest fire; nor was his appeal unheeded; every musket turned from him, although his still undaunted countrymen were preparing for a third attempt."—*Ibid.*

have been better far avoided. The action was most injudiciously brought on; no results could justify the risk; the division was unnecessarily endangered; and a more brilliant affair was never more idly nor unprofitably hazarded.*

While these events were being transacted, Reignier, who commanded in Estremadura, suddenly broke up from Merida, and crossing the Tagus at Alconete and Almaraz, obliged Hill to march by Villa Velha on Castello Branco, which place he reached upon the 21st. General Leith, with 2,000 British and 8,000 Portuguese troops, was cantoned at Thomar, holding the line of the Zezere; and Wellington, with the main body of the allies, numbering some 30,000 men, waited the result of Massena's movements—doubtful whether from his superior force he would content himself with masking the fortress of Almeida, or change the investment to a siege, and reduce that place before he ventured further into Portugal. Upon the latter the French marshal had determined, and Almeida was, in consequence, regularly besieged.

This fortress, although regularly constructed with six bastions, ravelins, an excellent ditch, and covered-way, was extremely defective. The ramparts were too high for the

* Return of killed, wounded, and missing, in the action of the 24th July, 1810:

	Officers.	Serjeants.	Drummers.	Rank and File.	Troop-horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	4	3	—	29	3	36
Wounded . . .	23	10	2	164	12	199
Missing . . .	1	1	1	80	—	83
Total .	28	14	3	273	15	318

Wellington Despatches.

glacis; and from some near ground, on the side of the attack, the bottom of the ditch might be seen. An old square castle, built on a mound in the centre of the town, contained three bomb-proofs, the doors of which were not secure; but with the exception of some damp casements in one bastion, there was no other magazine for the powder. Colonel Cox was governor, and his garrison, composed of one regular and two militia regiments, a body of artillery and a squadron of cavalry, amounted to about 4,000 men.*

The belief, in the British cantonments, was general, that Almeida would hold out to the last, and, if not a successful, that it would make a vigorous resistance—and indeed, much depended upon that event. The fortress was well armed and abundantly provisioned; but an unexpected calamity produced its sudden fall. The following extracts from Lord Wellington's despatch thus announced the capture of the place:

“The enemy opened their fire upon Almeida late on Saturday night, or early on Sunday morning, the 26th instant; and I am concerned to add that they obtained possession of the place in the course of the night of the 27th.

“I will not conceal from your lordship, that this unfortunate event has disappointed me much; as adverting to the manner in which the garrison has been supplied with all the necessaries for the defence of the fort; to the respectable state of the works, and of the good spirit which I had understood from the governor that the garrison maintained, I had hoped that this place would hold out to the last extremity, if I should not have had an opportunity of relieving it; and, at all events, would have detained the enemy till a late period in the season.”† * * *

* Napier.

† Despatch to Lord Liverpool, Celerico, 29th August, 1810.

“The Argauil militia, which was part of the garrison of Almeida, has been sent in, and the two other battalions are to follow this day and to-morrow. The colonel reports that the explosion of the magazine destroyed the whole town, made a breach in the place, blew all the guns, excepting three, into the ditch, destroyed all the ammunition excepting ten or twelve barrels of powder, and killed or wounded the greater part of the artillerymen. The garrison, till this accident, had sustained no loss, and was in the best order and spirits; and had no thoughts of surrender, and expected to hold the place for two months. The colonel talks highly of the conduct of Governor Cox.

“I am sorry to add, that the whole of the 24th regiment, with the exception of the major, and of the English officers, have gone into the French service. It is said that their object is to have an opportunity of deserting from it, which is well enough for the private soldiers, but it is highly disgraceful to the character of the officers.

“The major commanding the artillery was the person employed by Cox to settle the capitulation for him. He went out and informed the French of the exact state of the place after the explosion, and never returned. Massena has made him a colonel.”*

None foresaw more keenly than Lord Wellington the alarming consequences which the fall of Almeida would produce, following, as it did, in fatal rapidity so quick upon the capture of Rodrigo. At home, these disasters would furnish good grounds, on which the opposition might base the gloomiest anticipations. To the enemy, they afforded the happiest pretext to announce a present, and augur a glorious success to that campaign, from which Napoleon had promised such splendid results. In Spain, they unhappily engendered suspicion and despondency; and in Lisbon, a feeling was created, which went far to crush the

* Despatch to Mr. Stuart, 31st August, 1810.

cause of freedom. To the heads of the British ministry, the English general communicated these circumstances without reserve—and that letter to Lord Liverpool, while it points to the existing danger, shews that, regarding ulterior success, recent events, however calamitous, had never shaken Lord Wellington's dependency.

“About the period when the account of the loss of Almeida arrived at Lisbon, there was a fire in the town, at which the two regiments of militia were employed; and either during the continuance of the fire or after it was over, many of the officers and soldiers of these regiments went into the coffee-houses to refresh themselves. Here the conversation turned upon the operations of the armies, upon the loss of Almeida, and upon the proclamations by Massena and the Marquess d'Alorno;* and I understand that the sentiment which generally prevailed was, that the design of the English army was to embark, and that it was the duty of those two regiments of militia to seize “the towers,” as they are called, meaning Belem, St. Julian, the Bugio, &c., and to prevent the execution of this design.

“I should not have troubled your lordship upon this subject, having already adopted measures to employ this militia more usefully for the public service, and to secure the towers, if I did not conceive that these sentiments of the militia, were in some degree connected with those entertained by the Portuguese government, and with their conduct since the recent changes.

“This country has before been in great danger, and a great part of it, probably the richest and most important, was last year in the possession of the enemy; but at all times, and under all circumstances, I have possessed the confidence of the government; and their object has been, as far as was in their power, to forward my views for the public

* D'Alorno was a traitorous noble, who abandoned the cause of his country, and, on every occasion, became the willing tool of the French marshals.

service. I have apprized them of the system of operations in which I deemed it expedient to carry on the defence of the country, and they are aware of the grounds of my opinion, and the details of the plan; and till the late change, excepting occasional remarks from the patriarch on the supposed danger of his favourite city, Oporto, I never received from the government any observation, excepting of confidence, in the measures which I recommended or adopted; and the confidence and satisfaction of the public surpassed that of the government. But the principal Souza, who was introduced recently into the government, is of that impatient, meddling, and mischievous disposition (without, however, designing to do harm), that we cannot expect to go on as we have hitherto, so long as he shall continue a member of the government. His indiscretion is equally well known with the other defects of his character; and to this I attribute the dangerous sensation which appears to have been occasioned at Lisbon on the fall of Almeida.

“ In imitation of the fatal conduct of the central Junta, the Portuguese regency, since the late changes, have flattered, instead of coercing the mob of Lisbon, which will become dangerous in proportion as this new system is persevered in.

“ They have likewise, in imitation of the same body, interfered in the military operations; have deliberated upon the propriety of adopting offensive measures, and of moving the army into Spain; and I have no doubt that from the usual indiscretion of the same gentleman, these deliberations and opinions are as well known to the mob of Lisbon as they are to me. Then they have cast reflection and suspicion on every Portuguese employed by Marshal Beresford and me, likewise, in imitation of the central Junta; and in many important instances, some relating exclusively to the army, they have recently disobeyed the orders of the Prince Regent, to adopt no measure without consulting my opinion. * * * * * *

“ In respect to the military operations, his majesty’s government are best aware whether they have been conducted in a manner satisfactory to them or not. About a year has now elapsed since the army under my command has been the only force which could keep the field in the Peninsula; and, contrary to the general expectation, it is still in the field, has sustained no important loss, and the successful result of this campaign to the enemy becomes every day more doubtful.”*

While Lisbon was thus seriously disturbed, at Oporto also, the greatest consternation prevailed. Letters written in a tone of despondency by some weak-minded individuals at the head quarters of Lord Wellington, had reached that city. In these, the cause of Portugal was represented as hopeless—the strength of Massena was exaggerated—it was asserted with confidence that an embarkation of the British army must immediately take place—and consequently, that the French would obtain a permanent and undisputed possession of the country. The alarm thus created among the English merchants at Oporto was extreme, and many made hurried preparations to leave the city; while the factious journals in Great Britain promulgated these idle rumours as authentic facts, and they were of course, re-echoed by the *Moniteur*. From his own army, Wellington saw the arrow launched that wounded him most painfully; and the following passages in his letters show how keenly he felt the annoyances which folly and indiscretion had caused.

Alluding to the failure, on the 11th of July, in cutting off the French infantry picket at Villa de Puerco, Lord Wellington observes :—

“ All this would not much signify, if our staff and other officers would mind their business, instead of writing news and keeping coffee-houses. But, as soon as an accident

* Dated Gouvia, 13th Sept. 1810.

happens, every man who can write, and who has a friend who can read, sits down to write his account of what he does not know, and his comments on what he does not understand; and these are diligently circulated and exaggerated by the idle and malicious, of whom there are plenty in all armies. The consequence is, that officers and whole regiments lose their reputation; a spirit of party, which is the bane of all armies, is engendered and fomented; a want of confidence ensues; and there is no character, however meritorious, and no action, however glorious, which can have justice done to it. I have hitherto been so fortunate as to keep down this spirit in this army, and I am determined to persevere.* * * *

“I beg to draw your attention to the orders which I have given this day respecting the private correspondence of the officers of the army. I was astonished some time ago to see in the English newspapers, an accurate account of the batteries and works erecting at Cadiz and on the Isla, with the number of guns, and of what calibre each was to contain, and their distance from each other, and from the enemy’s works. This information must have been extracted from the letter of an officer. If officers wish to give their friends this description of information, they should request them not to publish their letters in the newspapers.”†

To a commanding officer these repeated annoyances must have been almost intolerable; and a mind less firm and elastic than Lord Wellington’s, with a heavy responsibility and an eternity of vexation, must have yielded. At home and abroad, all things united to embarrass him; and in his varied correspondence it will appear that, with a stubborn enemy to contend with, feeble allies to support, and desponding friends to inspirit, had he but allowed it,

* Addressed to Brigadier-General Craufurd, and dated Alvuca, 23d July, 1810.

† Addressed to Lieutenant-General Graham, and dated Celerico, 10th August, 1810.

he would have been obliged to cooperate with men whose proven criminality should have deterred the government from inflicting, upon one already overburthened with difficulties, the unenviable task of repudiating persons sent out, whose character and conduct were in every way disreputable. Respecting this, some curious particulars will be found in Lord Wellington's despatches—and prove the corruption or culpable indifference of the home departments of that day.*

In the mean time the crisis of the campaign was fast approaching. Massena moved forward on Viseu, and Wellington retired by the left bank of the Mondego. Leaving Craufurd's division and the cavalry on the Criz, at Martagoa, the English general retired behind the Alva; and on the 22d of September, the French concentrated at Viseu.

Massena's designs were speedily penetrated by Lord Wellington. The marshal's movements were evidently

* "I am afraid that Mr. —, who is gone to Cadiz at the head of the commissariat, is a man very little to be trusted. If I am not mistaken, he was in the military service of the East India Company, on the establishment of Fort St. George. If he was, he was dismissed from the service under the following circumstances:—

"An officer of the army accused him of having robbed him; that is to say, he literally stole his purse from him. The officer in question (whose name I do not recollect) was brought to trial before a general court martial for defamation, and was acquitted.

"I understand that the commander-in-chief, General Stuart, wanted to bring Mr. — to trial, on a charge to be framed against him on the accusation of the officer who had been acquitted of defamation; but Mr. — declined to stand his trial, and was dismissed the service.

"When he was dismissed from the service, other persons recollected having lost their purses, when in company with him; and I understood that he had once been accused of taking a purse out of an officer's writing box, but that the accusation was deemed so improbable that it was scouted.

"Although I think that a person who has an itch for purses is not a fit person to be a deputy commissary-general, in charge of the department, I should not have mentioned this subject to you upon my own recollection of these facts, if I could not point out to you the means of ascertaining them precisely."—

Despatch to Col. Gordon, dated Coa, 17th April, 1810.

directed on Coimbra, by the north of the Mondego. Abandoning the line of the Zezere and the routes upon Abrantes, his march trended either to the Busaco or Murcella heights, over both of which, the mountain roads north and south of the Mondego, are carried.

“ The Sierra de Busaco is a high ridge, which extends from the Mondego, in a northerly direction, about eight miles. At the highest point of the ridge, about two miles from its termination, is the convent and garden of Busaco.* The Sierra de Busaco is connected by a mountainous tract of country with the Sierra de Caramula, which extends in a north-easterly direction beyond Viseu, and separates the valley of the Mondego from the valley of the Douro. On the left of the Mondego, nearly in a line with the Serra de Busaco, is another ridge of the same description, called the Sierra de Murcella, covered by the river Alva, and connected by other mountainous parts with the Sierra d’Estrella.

* “ It is the only place in that kingdom where the bare-footed Carmelites possessed what, in monastic language, is called a desert; by which term an establishment is designated where those brethren, whose piety flies the highest pitch, may at once enjoy the advantages of the eremite and the discipline of the cenobite life, and thus indulge the heroism of ascetic devotion in security. The convent, surrounded by an extensive and almost impervious wood, stands in what may be called the crater of the loftiest part of the ridge; its precincts, which included a circumference of about four miles, were walled in. Within that circuit were various chapels and religious stations; and on the summit of the mountain, which is within the inclosure, a stone cross was erected of enormous size, upon so huge a foundation that three thousand cart-loads of stone were employed in constructing its base. The cells of the brethren were round the church, not in a regular building, but accommodated to the irregularities of the ground, and lined with cork, which was everywhere used instead of wood, because of the dampness of the situation. Every cell had its garden, and its water-course for irrigating it, the cultivation of these little spots being the only recreation which the inhabitants allowed themselves as lawful. In one of these gardens the first cedars which grew in Portugal were raised. It was indeed one of those places where man has converted an earthly paradise into a purgatory for himself, but where superstition almost seems sanctified by everything around it. Lord Wellington’s head-quarters were in the convent; and the solitude and silence of Busaco were now broken by events, in which its hermits, dead as they were to the world, might be permitted to partake all the agitations of earthly hope and fear.”—*Southey*.

“ All the roads to Coimbra, from the eastward, lead over the one or the other of these Sierras. They are very difficult for the passage of an army, the approaches to the top of the ridge on both sides being mountainous.”*

Massena's advance being now certain, and Reynier's corps, which had been opposite to that of Hill, in the valley of the Tagus, having moved rapidly towards the Mondego, obliged Hill to cross the river at Villa Velha, and unite himself with Wellington by the defile of Espinosa. On the 23d the French passed the Criz in force, having repaired the bridges which Pack had destroyed on the preceding day; and the British leisurely retired.

On the 24th, some smart skirmishing took place between the British pickets and the French light troops, which, being repeated on the 25th, had nearly brought on a very serious affair.

Disregarding the rapid advance of the enemy in overpowering numbers, Craufurd obstinately maintained the position he had taken up in the morning with the light division. The French cavalry were swarming round on every side, and their heavy columns of infantry marching at their best pace, with the evident design of cutting him off; but still the British general refused to give ground. “ The cavalry skirmishers were already exchanging pistol-shots, when Lord Wellington, suddenly arriving, ordered the division to retire, and, taking the personal direction, covered the retreat with the fifty-second and ninety-fifth, the cavalry and Ross's troop of horse artillery.”† Although the French came up rapidly, the light division was steadily withdrawn; and it crowned the ridge of Busaco, as the immense masses of the enemy displayed their imposing numbers upon the opposite heights.

If Busaco could have been assailed with success, then was the moment to attempt it. Reynier's division had

* Extracts from Despatch to Lord Liverpool, Coimbra, 30th Sept. 1810.

† Napier.

arrived by the left hand route, and taken its position at Antonio de Cantara, in front of Picton's division. The allies were moving dispersedly over the sierra, to reach their respective posts—half the hill was unoccupied—and, on two points, Ney and Reynier were in order of battle, with forty thousand combatants in hand. Both generals saw that this was the time for action—both were ardent to fall on—but Massena, who was ten miles in the rear, directed that the attack should be postponed, until he could personally direct it. That delay sealed the battle's fate; it enabled the first division to take its ground, the second to come up from Alva, the fifth to cross the Mondago, and the whole to place themselves upon that battle-field, from which every future effort to dislodge them was bravely and bloodily repelled.







Burford

CHAPTER XII.

MASSENA ANNOYED BY THE PARTISAN CHIEFS—BEAUTIFUL PROSPECT FROM BUSACO—ALLIED DISPOSITIONS—BIVOUAC ON THE BATTLE GROUND—MORNING ATTACK—BATTLE OF BUSACO—CHARACTER OF THAT ACTION—LOSSES SUSTAINED ON BOTH SIDES—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—MORAL ADVANTAGES OF THE VICTORY—MASSENA TURNS THE POSITION, AND WELLINGTON RETIRES, WASTING THE COUNTRY—SINGULAR APPEARANCE OF THE ALLIED ARMY ON ITS RETREAT—IT REACHES TORRES VEDRAS—DESCRIPTION OF THE LINES OF LISBON—MASSENA PRESSES FORWARD—SLIGHT CONFUSION AT CONDEIXA—SEVERE EXAMPLE AT LEYRIA—ALLIES RETREAT IN PERFECT ORDER, AND TAKE UP THEIR FORTIFIED POSITION.

MASSENA'S advance was not accomplished without annoyance. In accordance with the orders issued by Lord Wellington, the country, on either bank of the Mondego, had been wasted, the mills rendered unserviceable, the villages deserted, and the inhabitants removed from their dwellings, and obliged to hide themselves in the mountains.*

* In a proclamation previously addressed to the nation, after pointing out the falsity of French professions, the British general urged the necessity of adopting this course of annoying an enemy, who trusted for their supplies to the country into which they were advancing :

“The Portuguese now see that they have no remedy for the evil with which they are threatened, but determined resistance. Resistance, and the determination to render the enemy's advance into their country as difficult as possible by removing out of his way every thing that is valuable, or that can contribute to his subsistence, or frustrate his progress, are the only and the certain remedies for the evils with which they are threatened.

“The army under my command will protect as large a proportion of the country as will be in their power; but it is obvious that the people can save

The partisan leaders hung upon the flanks of the French army, and occasionally showed themselves in the rear; while, taking advantage of the badness of the road having delayed Massena's military chest and reserve artillery, Trant made a bold attempt to seize both; and had the Portuguese militia been more manageable, there is little doubt that his success would have been equal to his daring. As it was, he created much confusion, carried off an hundred prisoners, delayed the enemy two marches, and thus gave Wellington ample time, had that been necessary, to establish his detached brigades securely in their positions at Busaco.

The morning of the 26th broke in cloudless beauty, and a more glorious sight was never presented to a soldier's view; indeed, "nothing could be conceived more enlivening, more interesting, or more varied, than the scene from the heights of Busaco. Commanding a very extensive prospect to the eastward, the movements of the French army were distinctly perceptible; it was impossible to conceal them from the observation of the troops stationed along the whole range of the mountain; nor did this appear to be the object of the enemy. Rising grounds were covered with troops, cannon, or equipages: the widely extended country seemed to contain a host moving forward, or gradually condensing into numerous masses, checked in their progress by the grand natural barrier on which the allies were placed, and at the base of which it became themselves only by resistance to the enemy, and their properties only by removing them.

"The duty, however, which I owe to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, and to the Portuguese nation, will oblige me to use the power and authority in my hands to force the weak and the indolent to make an exertion to save themselves from the danger which awaits them, and to save their country; and I hereby declare, that all magistrates, or persons in authority, who remain in the towns or villages, after receiving orders from any of the military officers to retire from them; and all persons, of whatever description, who hold any communication with the enemy, and aid or assist them in any manner, will be considered traitors to the state, and shall be tried and punished accordingly."—

Wellington Despatches.

necessary to pause. In imposing appearance as to numerical strength, there has been rarely seen any thing comparable to that of the enemy's army from Busaco; it was not alone an army encamped before us, but a multitude: cavalry, infantry, artillery, cars of the country, horses, tribes of mules with their attendants, sutlers, followers of every description, crowded the moving scene upon which Lord Wellington and his army looked down."*

The disposition of the British brigades had been changed and amended during the time that Massena took up in bringing forward his eighth corps. In the new arrangements, Hill's division crossed the road leading to Pena Cova; Leith was next upon the left, with the Lusitanian legion in reserve; the third division joined the fifth, supported by a Portuguese brigade; and the first division held the highest point of the Sierra between Picton and the convent.† The fourth division closed the left, and covered the road to Milheada, where the cavalry were detached; "Pack's brigade, forming an advanced guard to the first division, was posted half way down the descent, and the light division, supported by a German brigade, occupied a piece of ground jutting out nearly half a mile in front of, and about two hundred feet lower than the convent, the space between being naturally scooped like the hollow of a wave before it breaks. Along the whole of the front, skirmishers were thrown out on the mountain-side, and about fifty pieces of artillery were disposed upon the salient points."‡

The British army, during the night, lay in dense masses on the summit of the mountain. The sky was clear, and the dark rocky eminences rising on both sides of the pass,

* Leith Hay.

† "To form some idea of the great extent of the position at Busaco, it is only necessary to state that, after 50,000 men had been placed upon it, a space of nearly two miles intervened from the left of General Leith's corps to the right of the third division standing next in line."—*Ibid.*

‡ Napier.

were crowned by the fires of innumerable bivouacs. The veterans in the English army, accustomed to similar scenes of excitement, slept profoundly on their stony beds; but many of the younger soldiers, who were now to witness a battle for the first time, were kept awake by the grandeur and solemnity of the scene around them. As the first streaks of dawn were beginning to appear over the eastern hills, a rustling noise was heard in the wooded dells which ran up to the crest of the mountains. It arose from the French outposts, who, stealing unobserved during the night, had thus got close to the outposts of the English position without being perceived. The alarm was instantly given, and the troops started to their arms at all points. It was full time, for in a few minutes more the French in two masses were upon them."*

The French attack was made in five columns, and on two distinct points, about a league apart from each other. Reynier, with two columns, mounted the hill at Antonio de Cantara—and Ney, with three, in front of the convent of Busaco. Reynier had less difficulties to overcome, as the face of the Sierra by which he advanced was more practicable; and, favoured by the mist, his skirmishers were mingled with the light troops of the third division, almost as soon as the pickets had discovered that the enemy were in motion. The allies resisted vigorously, and the British artillery swept the face of the Sierra with a destructive storm of grape; but the French pressed forward, forced the right of the division back, threw a Portuguese regiment into disorder, and gained the crest of the ridge between Picton's and Leith's divisions. The enemy instantly endeavoured to secure the height they had won with their advanced battalions, and, with the remainder of the corps, press rapidly along the ridge of the hill. But in front, volleys of musketry checked them—their flank was torn by the fire of the British guns—while the 45th and 88th came forward with the bayonet, and, charging furi-

* Alison's History of Europe.

ously, drove all before them, and forced the shattered column down the hill, "the dead and dying strewing the way even to the bottom of the valley."

Reynier's leading regiments still held the summit of the height; and, shrouded in the haze and partially unseen, they re-formed their ranks, while the third division was driving the rest of the column from the mountain. They had not, however, escaped the observation of General Leith, and he instantly advanced with his first brigade to the assistance of Picton. The 38th regiment was ordered to turn the right of the French; but, as that flank of the enemy rested upon a precipice on the reverse of the Sierra, it was impossible to effect it. Colonel Cameron saw the emergency, and deploying the 9th regiment into line under a furious fire, he charged in among rocks, forced the French with the bayonet from the crest, and secured it with his regiment from any second effort which the enemy might make to win it back. All now went well;—"Hill's corps edged in towards the scene of action; the second brigade of Leith joined the first, and a great mass of fresh troops were thus concentrated, while Reynier had neither reserves nor guns to restore the fight."*

The greater difficulty of the ground rendered Ney's attacks still less successful, even for a time, than Reynier's had proved. Craufurd's disposition of the light division was masterly. Under a dipping of the ground between the convent and plateau, the 43d and 52d were formed in line; while higher up the hill, and closer to the convent, the Germans were drawn up. The rocks in front formed a natural battery for the guns; and the whole face of the Sierra was crowded with riflemen and Caçadores. As morning dawned, a sharp and scattered musquetry was heard among the broken hollows of the valley that separated the rival armies, and immediately the French presented themselves in three divisions; Loisson's mounting the face of the Sierra, Marchand's inclining leftwards, as if intend-

* Napier.

ing to turn the right flank of the left division, and the third remaining in reserve.

“The brigade of General Simon led the attack; and, reckless of the constant fusilade of the British light troops and the sweeping fire of the artillery, which literally ploughed through the advancing column from its leading to its last section, the enemy came steadily and quickly on. The horse-artillery worked their guns with amazing rapidity—delivering round after round with such beautiful precision, that the wonder was, how any body of men could advance under such a withering and incessant cannonade. But nothing could surpass the gallantry of the assailants. On they came—and, in a few moments, their skirmishers, ‘breathless and begrimed with powder,’ topped the ridge of the Sierra. The British guns were instantly retired—the French cheers arose—and, in another second, their column topped the height.

“General Craufurd, who had coolly watched the progress of the advance, called on the 43d and 52d to ‘Charge!’ A cheer that pealed for miles over the Sierra answered the order, and ‘eighteen hundred British bayonets went sparkling over the brow of the hill.’ The head of the French column was overwhelmed in an instant; ‘both its flanks were lapped over by the English wings,’ while volley after volley, at a few yards distance, completed its destruction, and marked with hundreds of its dead and dying, all down the face of the Sierra, the course of its murderous discomfiture. Some of the light troops continued slaughtering the broken columns nearly to the bottom of the hill, until Ney’s guns opened from the opposite side, and covered the escape of the relics of Simon’s division.”*

When Simon’s attack was finally repulsed, Marchand’s brigade had gained a wood half way up the Sierra, and threatened the centre of the position. But they never advanced beyond the cover of the pine-trees—Pack’s Portuguese regiment held them firmly in check, the guards

* Victories of the British Armies.



showed themselves in force on the crest of the height, while Craufurd, now disengaged, turned a searching fire from his guns upon their flank. Ney, in person, sustained this hopeless contest for an hour, and then retired in despair, leaving the British position as unassailable as it had been previous to the general attack.

The roar of battle ended; and, beyond now and then a dropping shot, Busaco was undisturbed,* and nothing indicated the recent conflict, but the melancholy tokens which mark "a foughten field." In front of the light division, the hill was thickly covered with the dead and dying; and permission was granted by Craufurd for the French to remove their wounded. That interval, honourable to the humanity of civilized warfare, was charitably employed on both sides; and French and English intermingled with perfect confidence and good humour, each seeking and taking off their wounded men, and occasionally offering a mutual assistance.

But that friendly interval was brief. A village within pistol shot of the light division had been occupied by the French, and, on being desired to retire, they refused to obey the order. Craufurd was not to be trifled with; a dozen guns were turned on the devoted village; and when both houses and defenders were half demolished, a company of the 43d descended from the position, and drove out the remnant of the occupants.

The contest at Busaco was never doubtful for a moment; but where it was hottest, there Lord Wellington was found. When not personally engaged in directing movements, he

* Colonel Napier relates the following interesting anecdote:—"Meanwhile an affecting incident, contrasting strongly with the savage character of the preceding events, added to the interest of the day. A poor orphan Portuguese girl, about seventeen years of age, and very handsome, was seen coming down the mountain and driving an ass, loaded with all her property, through the midst of the French army. She had abandoned her dwelling in obedience to the proclamation; and now passed over the field of battle with a childish simplicity, totally unconscious of her perilous situation, and scarcely understanding which were the hostile and which the friendly troops, for no man on either side was so brutal as to molest her."

communicated, from time to time, to the generals of divisions such changes as he considered necessary for their guidance.* All had been ably conceived—all was happily executed—and, in the words of a staff officer,—“ There was something exhilarating to a degree in the whole day of Busaco : as it advanced, a bright sun shone on the armies ; no event had occurred to counteract the full tide of success attending the defensive warfare adopted by Lord Wellington ; strength of position, with great firmness of purpose, had enabled the allies to repel very serious attacks with comparatively trifling loss ; and the glacis of the mountain-

* The following orders were written in pencil, and show how rapidly the mind of Wellington grasped every object at the moment it was presented.

“ On the top of the Sierra, 10 min. before 7 P.M.

“ MY DEAR GENERAL,

“ I see the columns behind the wood in front of your right, but not standing to their arms. I cannot see anything to your left of them.

“ I think that if you see nothing upon your left, you had better collect at least one regiment of Colonel Harvey's brigade to support your centre and right.

“ Major-General the Hon. L. Cole.”

“ As General Craufurd is threatened as well as you, you had better not draw towards you in the first instance, more than two battalions of the Germans. You need not move any of the Germans till you are certain that you are about to be attacked.”

To the same.

“ Busaco, 28th Sept. 1810, 8 A.M.

“ Have you had any patrol out to the front of your right, towards Gondalem, or beyond Carvalho Velho ?

“ Has General Hill any intelligence from the left bank of the Mondego ?

“ Major-Gen. Leith and Lieut.-Gen. Hill.”

“ Busaco, 28th Sept. 1810, half-past 10 A.M.

“ MY DEAR HILL,

“ Send to Le Cor, and desire him to have at least a battalion, and two guns, on the northern extremity of the Sierra da Murcella, in order to defend the right flank of the post of Na. Sa. del Monte.

“ Let Fane watch well the movements of the enemy's left, and give me the earliest intelligence of them. Joz d'Alva is a very important point.”

“ Observe the enemy upon the right, and if there is no attack directed upon that side, close the British infantry to the right.”

To the same.

barrier on which they stood was heaped with bodies of the enemy.”*

The loss of life at Busaco, as might have been expected from the obstinacy with which the enemy continued gallant and unavailing efforts, was most severe; but the casualties of the French and allied armies, relatively, bore no proportion. The strength of his position, and his being enabled to employ artillery with terrible effect, gave to the British General an advantage, of which he amply availed himself. Hence, of the enemy, six thousand put “hors de combat,” cannot be over the amount.† Of this number, about three hundred, including General Simon, three colonels, and thirty-three inferior officers, were made prisoners; and nearly two thousand—for as the English buried the slain, they could form on this point a correct estimate—were left dead upon the battle-ground.‡ Among the killed was

* Leith Hay.

† The French loss was at first considerably exaggerated; and few English writers yet agree in estimating its amount. According to Colonel Jones, Massena’s loss was two thousand killed, three hundred prisoners, and from five to six thousand wounded. Napier only makes the killed eight hundred, and wounded and prisoners about three thousand seven hundred. Other writers differ as widely in their estimates.

‡ Return of the killed, wounded, and missing, of the Allied Army under Lord Wellington, on the 25th and 26th of September, and in the action of the 27th, at Busaco:—

	Officers.	Serjeants.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	11	6	180	5	197
Wounded . . .	62	32	920	12	1014
Missing	1	3	54	10	58
Total	74	41	1054	27	1269

The Portuguese casualties are included in this return.

the French general, Graind'orge; and three generals of division, Merle, Loison, and Macune, were wounded. The entire of the casualties sustained by the allied army amounted to one thousand two hundred and sixty-nine, of whom seventy-four were officers of all ranks.

The subsequent operations of Massena are thus detailed in Lord Wellington's official despatch to Lord Liverpool:

"The enemy did not renew his attack, excepting by the fire of his light troops on the 28th; but he moved a large body of infantry and cavalry from the left of his centre to the rear, from whence I saw his cavalry in march on the road from Mortagoa, over the mountains towards Oporto.

"Having thought it probable that he would endeavour to turn our left by that road, I had directed Colonel Trant, with his division of militia, to march to Sardaô, with the intention that he should occupy the mountains, but unfortunately he was sent round by Oporto, by the general officer commanding in the north, in consequence of a small detachment of the enemy being in possession of S. Pedro do Sul; and, notwithstanding the efforts which he made to arrive in time, he did not reach Sardaô till the 28th at night, after the enemy were in possession of the ground.

"As it was probable that, in the course of the night of the 28th, the enemy would throw the whole of his army upon the road, by which he could avoid the Serra de Busaco and reach Coimbra by the high road of Oporto, and thus the army would have been exposed to be cut off from that town, or to a general action in less favourable ground; and as I had reinforcements in my rear, I was induced to withdraw from the Serra de Busaco.

"The enemy did break up in the mountains at eleven at night of the 28th, and he made the march I expected. His advanced guard was at Avelans, on the road from Oporto to Coimbra, yesterday, and the whole army was seen in march through the mountains. That under my command, however, was already in the low country, be-

tween the Serra de Busaco and the sea; and the whole of it, with the exception of the advanced guard, is this day on the left of the Mondego.

“Although, from the unfortunate circumstance of the delay of Colonel Trant’s arrival at Sardaô, I am apprehensive that I shall not succeed in effecting the object which I had in view in passing the Mondego and in occupying the Serra de Busaco, I do not repent my having done so. This movement has afforded me a favourable opportunity of showing the enemy the description of troops of which this army is composed; it has brought the Portuguese levies into action with the enemy for the first time in an advantageous situation; and they have proved that the trouble which has been taken with them has not been thrown away, and that they are worthy of contending in the same ranks with British troops in this interesting cause, which they afford the best hopes of saving.

“Throughout the contest on the Serra, and in all the previous marches, and those which we have since made, the whole army have conducted themselves in the most regular manner. Accordingly, all the operations have been carried on with ease; the soldiers have suffered no privations,—have undergone no unnecessary fatigue,—there has been no loss of stores, and the army is in the highest spirits.”*

It was not, however, either in the physical loss or the abated pride which his victory inflicted upon Massena, that Wellington’s advantages were comprised. The moral effect was far more important: Busaco, for the first time, brought the Portuguese troops into collision with the French, and under circumstances too, that gave them at once a victory. “It may safely be affirmed that, owing to this success, on the day after the battle, the strength of the Portuguese troops was doubled. The sight of this auspicious change dispelled any desponding feeling from the

* Wellington Despatches, dated Coimbra, 30th Sept. 1810.

British army. No presentiments of ultimate discomfiture were any longer entertained. The plan of defence which the far-seeing sagacity of their chief had formed, revealed itself to the meanest sentinel, and the troops of every nation prepared to follow the standard of their leader with that ready alacrity and undoubting confidence, which is at once the forerunner, and the cause of ultimate triumph."*

That Massena should persevere in advancing further into Portugal after the terrible lesson he had received on the Sierra of Busaco, was contrary to all military principles, and consequently, induced Lord Wellington to believe that the French marshal would abandon the attempt, and fall back to the Spanish frontier. But whether irritated at his defeat, or urged forward by his necessities, the French marshal sought for and acquired information, which enabled him to turn the British position, and by the pass of Sardaô, gain the Oporto road. His feint of a renewed attack upon the 28th failed—for the flank movement of his opponent, did not for a single moment escape the eagle glance of Wellington. Instantly abandoning his mountain position, the British general took the direct route on Torres Vedras, through Coimbra and Leyria, enforcing by every means within his power, the orders previously issued in his proclamation, which directed that the country should be wasted, and the towns deserted by their inhabitants, and left in desolate loneliness to the invaders.

"Generally, these orders were obeyed with a devotion that seems remarkable. Property was wasted or concealed—and the shrine and cottage, alike abandoned by their occupants—the peasant, deserting the hearth where he had been nursed—the monk, the altar where he had worshipped from his boyhood. These fugitives accompanied the army on its march,—and when it halted in the lines, one portion of the wanderers proceeded to Lisbon, while the greater number crossed the Tagus, to seek on its southern shores, a temporary retreat from those who

* Alison's History of Europe.

had obliged them to sacrifice their possessions, and fly from the dwellings of their fathers."*

The regressive movement of the allied army was a military spectacle which had never been previously exhibited; and nothing could be more imposing, nor more strange. On the 1st of October, it presented an extraordinary scene, "the varieties of which, it is impossible minutely to describe; but when it is explained, that the route was absolutely and continuously covered during its whole extent, some idea may be formed as to its unusual aspect. It was not alone troops of all arms, attended by the encumbrances or followers of an army; it was not peasantry, removing with their families; it was not the higher orders of society, travelling conformably to their rank; it was not the furniture, grain, cattle, of an extensive line of country, passing from one station to another; but it was all these combined, pressing forward in one varied, confused, apparently interminable mass."†

Every thing considered, a retreat was never conducted in better order. The weather, until the infantry reached the lines, was good. At Coimbra, Condeixa, Redinha and Leyria, the troops became troublesome, until at the latter place the mischief was so much increased, that "Lord Wellington arrested this growing disorder with a strong hand. Three men, taken in the fact at Leyria, were hanged on the spot; and some regiments, whose discipline was more tainted than others, were forbidden to enter a village."‡

Ignorant respecting the strength of the position to which his opponent was retiring—and indifferent to the desperate resources on which he was about to entrust the existence of his army, the French marshal accelerated his march. Before him were impregnable lines—around him an exhausted country. Misled by the ignorance of traitors—blinded by those fortunes which had raised a peasant of

* Victories of the British Armies.

† Leith Hay.

‡ Napier.

Nice into a prince of that empire, which for a time, had left all others in the shade, Massena dared his fate; and, like his master, he found by sad experience, that fortune, when too often pressed, terminates invariably in disaster and disgrace.

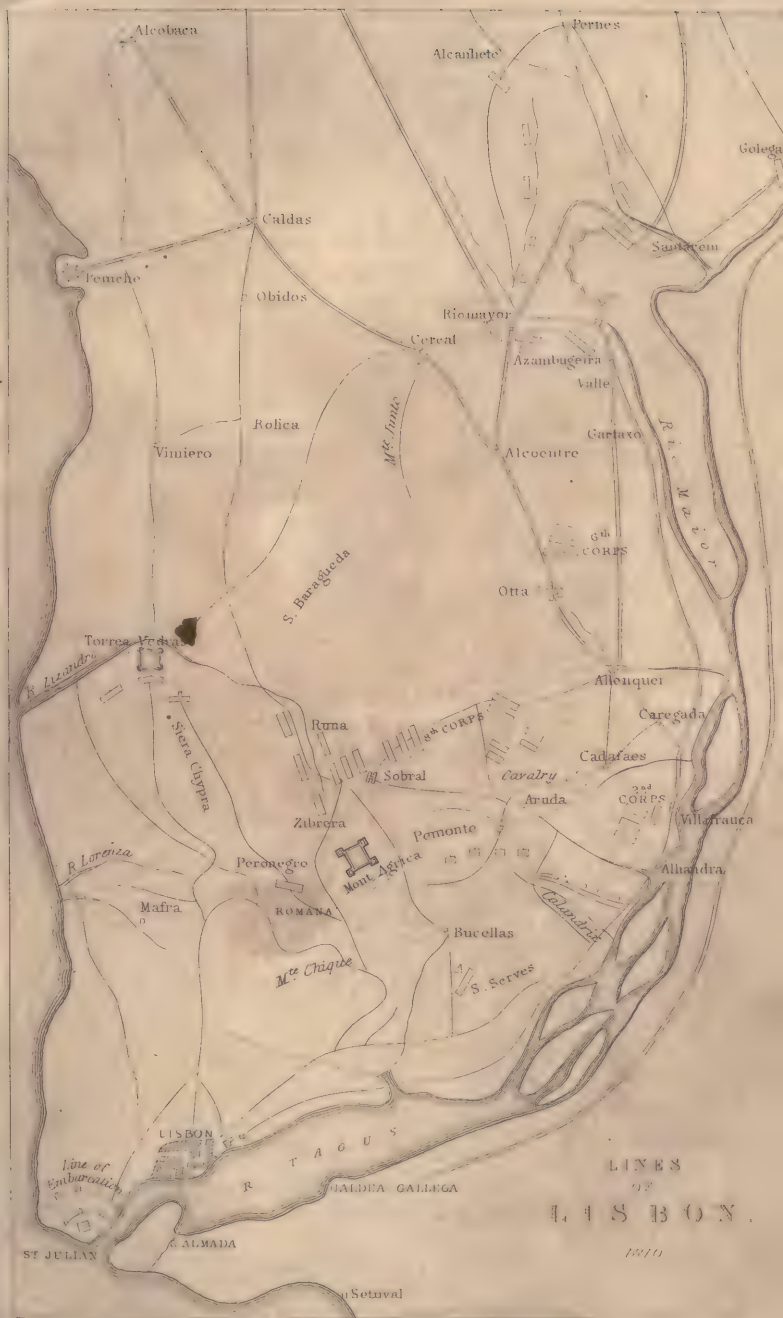
On the evening of the 8th of October, the advanced guards of the allies entered the lines, and on the 16th, their posts were fully occupied—and now the secret labours of a year, were about to recompense the skill and perseverance which, under every discouraging event, had brought an admirable commencement to a triumphant close.

A general notice of the localities of the country, with a cursory description of the nature of its defences, will enable a reader to form a correct idea of the strength and extent of those stupendous lines, with which English skill and labour had secured the capital of Portugal.

“ The Peninsula on which Lisbon stands, is traversed by two lofty heights, that stretch from the Tagus to the ocean, varying in altitude and abruptness, and running in a parallel direction, at a distance of from six to nine miles. Through the passes in these mountains, the four great roads that communicate between Lisbon and the interior, run. The line on the Sierra next the capital is the stronger of the two. It commences at Ribamar, on the Rio Lorenzo, runs by Mafra, Cabeça de Montachique, and the pass of Bucellas, and descends precipitously on the plain, about an English league from the Tagus. This is the only weak point; and all that skill and labour could effect, was exhausted to fortify every spot that nature had left open, and thus render Torres Vedras, its extent considered, the strongest position in Europe.”*

“ In front of Via Longa, upon an eminence rising from the plain, at a short distance from the river, six redoubts were constructed, so situated, in consequence of the nearly circular formation of the plateau, as to command the approaches in every direction within the range of their

* Victories of the British Armies.



artillery. Three of these immediately domineered the great route from Alhandra to Lisbon, to the right of which, upon a knoll, in front of the town of Povoá, another work was formed, sweeping the communication in the direction of Quintella. On the bank of the Tagus, a redoubt, armed with four twelve-pounders, terminated the line at its eastern extremity. Fifty-nine redoubts, containing 232 pieces of cannon, estimated to require 17,500 men to garrison them, protected the weaker points, enfiladed the roads, or swept the ascent to the escarped mountains in the range of this extended position, occupying a front of twenty-two miles.

“ The front line had been originally intended for one of isolated posts, rather than an unbroken extent of defensive ground, which it was subsequently made. It rests also on the Atlantic, at the mouth of the Zizandre; its weakest point being in the rear of the valley of Runa, where it stretches to Monte Agraça, and ample care was taken to correct this natural defect.

“ On the Sierra, in the rear of Sobral, was constructed a redoubt of great magnitude, armed with twenty-five pieces of artillery, and prepared for a garrison of 1000 men. This formidable work, from its commanding and central situation, was the constant daily resort of Lord Wellington. There he came every morning, and continued until it was ascertained that no hostile movement had taken place, and until light permitted a *reconnaissance* of the enemy's troops encamped opposite. From the redoubt on Monte Agraça, the line continued, crossing the valleys of Aruda and Calhandrix, until it rested on the Tagus at Alhandra.*

“ Across the ravine on the left, a loose stone wall, sixteen feet thick and forty feet high, was raised; and across the great valley of Aruda, a double line of abatis was drawn—not composed, as is usual, of the limbs of trees, but of full grown oaks and chestnuts, dug up with all their

* Leith Hay.

roots and branches, dragged by main force for several hundred yards, and then reset and crossed, so that no human strength could break through. Breast-works, at convenient distances, to defend this line of trees, were then cast up; and along the summits of the mountain, for a space of nearly three miles, including the salient points, other stone walls, six feet high and four in thickness, with banquettes,* were built; so that a good defence could have been made against the attacks of 20,000 men.†

“ Nature and art had rendered the ground from Calhandrix to the river particularly strong; but to make the defences still more formidable, and to form an intermediate obstruction, redoubts were thrown up extending to the rear, nearly at right angles with the front line. These swept the whole portion of the valley, by which a column of infantry must penetrate, even had it succeeded in forcing an entrance into the ravine. Sixty-nine works of different descriptions fortified this line; in these were mounted 319 pieces of artillery, requiring upwards of 18,000 men to garrison them; and the extent, in a direct line from flank to flank, was twenty-five miles.

“ It had been erroneously supposed that the regular army was, in the event of an attack, to occupy the redoubts and other works in the lines; or, at all events, that a large proportion of the troops would of necessity defend these temporary fortifications. In this calculation of probable circumstances, no British soldiers, with the exception of artillery, would have acted within their walls. Some Portuguese infantry, with the militia and ordonanza, were destined to compose the garrisons; while the whole allied army, numerous, brilliant in equipment, high in spirit, confident in its great commander, was prepared to move in every direction to cover the summits of mountains, to descend into valleys, or to pour in torrents on any luckless

* Banks or platforms, raised sufficiently high behind a work to enable its defenders to fire over the parapet.

† Napier.

column that, with diminished numbers, might have forced past the almost impenetrable obstacles of this grand position.

“ In addition to the works thrown up in either line, or in the intervening points of communication, rivers were obstructed in their course, flooding the valleys, and rendering the country swampy and impassable; trenches were cut, from whence infantry, perfectly protected, might fire on the advancing columns of an enemy; these being also flanked by artillery, sweeping the approaches to them in every direction. Mountains were scarped as above stated; abatis, of the most formidable description, either closed the entrance to ravines, impeded an approach to the works, or blocked up roads, in which deep cuts were also marked out for excavation; routes, conducting from the front, were rendered impracticable; others within the lines either repaired, or formed to facilitate communication, to admit the passage of artillery, or reduce the distance by which the troops had to move for the purposes of concentration or resistance; bridges were mined, and prepared for explosion; and telegraphs, erected at Alhandra, Monte Agraca, Socorra, Torres Vedras, and in the rear of Ponte de Rol, rapidly communicated information from one extremity of the line to the other. These signal stations were in charge of seamen from the fleet in the Tagus.

To complete the barriers, palisades, platforms, and planked bridges, leading into the works, 50,000 trees were placed at the disposal of the engineer department, during the three months, ending on the 7th of October, 1810. “ The cannon in the works were supplied by the Portuguese government. Cars, drawn by oxen, transported twelve-pounders where wheels had never previously rolled. Above 3000 officers and artillerymen of the country assisted in arming the redoubts, and were variously employed in the lines. At one period, exclusive of these, of the British engineers, artificers, or infantry soldiers, 7000 peasantry worked as labourers in the completion of an

undertaking only to have been accomplished under the most favourable circumstances, both with regard to cordiality of assistance, neighbouring arsenals, a British fleet in the Tagus, constant uninterrupted communication with a great capital, a regular remuneration to the labourers, an anxious and deep interest in the result to be accomplished by the assistance of the works in progress, and, above all, an intelligence and firmness in command that could at the same time extract the greatest benefits from these combinations, and urge exertion where it appeared to relax."

Ignorant of the matchless position of his adversary, the Prince of Essling pressed blindly on, but already his rival was beyond his grasp; while, in his rear, and on his flanks, a host of irregulars were swarming. In war, daring does much, but prudence does more—and Massena's campaign points that moral well.



CHAPTER XIII.

MASSENA CROSSES THE SIERRA DE CARAMULA, AND ENTERS COIMBRA—CONFUSION AT CONDEIXA—ORDERLY RETREAT OF THE ALLIES—AFFAIR AT SOBRAL—DISPOSITION OF THE ALLIED DIVISIONS—COIMBRA SURPRISED BY TRANT—GLOOMY PROSPECTS OF MASSENA—LETTER TO MR. STUART—PREDATORY HABITS OF THE FRENCH—LORD WELLINGTON ADOPTS A DEFENSIVE SYSTEM—IS EMBARRASSED BY INTRIGUES AND MISREPRESENTATIONS—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—FALSEHOODS OF THE OPPOSITION PRESS—MASSENA'S TRUE POSITION—HIS DIFFICULTIES INCREASE—STATE OF THE ALLIED ARMY—DESERTION—MISCONDUCT OF THE PATRIARCH—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—SOUZA'S FOLLY—FALSE INSINUATIONS OF THE REGENCY—LETTER TO MR. STUART—EFFECTS PRODUCED BY IT.

THE information obtained from a peasant, that an open pass in the Sierra de Caramula, led directly into the Coimbra road, was confirmed by General St. Croix,* who had been detached by Massena, with a regiment of dragoons, to feel the way, and report how far the route was practicable. By that line the French marshal advanced, drove in a cavalry picket at Boyalva, and forced Trant, with some loss, across the Vouga. On the 30th, the allied infantry were in full march upon the Lisbon road, with their rear-guard in front of Fornos. A smart skirmish ensued upon the 1st of October; and, on the same day, the French entered Coimbra,—a city, from its extent and locality, that promised much to the invaders,—and which, owing to the indifference showed by the inhabitants to the orders of Lord Wellington, unfortunately afforded them a very ample supply.

* He was killed, a few days afterwards, by a cannon-shot from a gun-boat, while reconnoitering at Villa Franca.

At Coimbra, one of those scenes of confusion always incident to a retreat occurred, and had nearly involved a British division in a dangerous conflict with the enemy's advance. On the appearance of the French cavalry in force, the light division, which formed the rear-guard, pressed through the city to gain and occupy the passes of Condeixa. Man naturally clings to his home, and the humblest dwelling is abandoned with regret. Although many of the inhabitants of Coimbra had retired, more remained; and when it was suddenly announced that the enemy were at hand, all hurried off, some carrying valuable effects, and others burthened with the young, the aged, and the infirm. A disorderly mass of men and animals crowded the bridge, and choked the road—the fugitives mobbing themselves among the soldiers, and that too, at a moment when the French cavalry crossed the river by a ford, and threatened the flank of the rear-guard.

“A single regiment of foot would have been sufficient to destroy the division, wedged in, as it was, in a hollow way, and totally incapable of advancing, retreating, or breaking out on either side. At last some of the infantry opened a passage on the right flank, and, by great exertions, the road was cleared for the guns; but it was not until after dusk that the division reached Condeixa, although the distance was less than eight miles. Head-quarters were that night at Redinha, and the next day at Leyria.”*

With this exception, a retreat of nearly two hundred miles was executed with perfect regularity. The allies retired by the great roads of Espenhal and Leyria, in échellons of divisions; and, with the exception of a few cavalry affairs of no great moment—one at Pombal and the other at Alcoentre, the allies entered their destined position with fewer casualties than attend a hurried march. Never was a military operation more ably executed.—“Nothing could have been conducted with greater ease to the troops; not a straggler had been taken, not a gun

abandoned, not an article of baggage lost ; the infantry had never even been seen by the enemy, except at Busaco, where they gave them battle, and signally defeated them ; and the cavalry had taken on the way more prisoners from the enemy than the allies lost, a circumstance which probably never occurred in any former retreat. The troops, therefore, became confident that their commander had no thought of abandoning the contest ; and that an embarkation was not his object, but that he was acting upon some settled plan, which he was well able to carry to the end. But when they entered the lines which they were to occupy, their surprise was hardly less than that of Massena and his army, at the foresight which they there saw displayed, and the skill with which a strong position had been rendered impregnable.”*

The last skirmish between the outposts occurred on the 12th. Sobral had been abandoned by the first division, and the head-quarters of Massena were established in Alenquer. On a rising ground beyond a ravine, the 71st threw up a breastwork ; and, at a short distance, the French constructed a redoubt, formed of some casks and lumber that Sobral had afforded them. There they established an advanced post ; and, on the morning of the 14th, one of those picturesque affairs, which diversify the monotonous character of warfare, occurred.

The morning was beautiful, and on the road in front of Sobral, “ a crowd of officers on horseback, detachments of cavalry, dragoons with led horses, and all the cortège of a general-in-chief, suddenly appeared. The drums beat ; the troops in rear of the village got under arms : still no movement was perceptible in the post to which we were immediately opposed. It was, however, evident that a reconnaissance of some importance was contemplated ; nor did it appear probable the troops would be permitted long to continue in their present inactive state.

“ Marshal Massena, the Duc d’Elchingen, and General

* Southey.

Junot, ascended to a height a short distance to the north of the town, where they dismounted, near a windmill, and became seated, apparently reconnoitering the position opposite. Soon after their arrival, a rocket was fired from the cask redoubt, succeeded by the unmasking of some light guns, which were instantaneously discharged against the breastwork of the 71st.*

This was followed by a rush of the French infantry; but their assault was met, and not awaited. The 71st, led by Colonel Cadogan, drove them back with the bayonet, and carried the redoubt they had thrown up. Light troops, on both sides, gradually took part in the combat, which, after having caused some loss to each party, terminated at sunset, by the British taking a more retired line of posts.

The disposition of the allied army had been previously arranged, and each division occupied its allotted ground, with the exception of Craufurd's, which accident delayed some hours. At Monte Agraca, Pack's Portuguese brigade was posted; the fifth division held the reverse of the heights, in rear of the great redoubt; the second division was at Alhandra, with the light troops upon its left, extending across Aruda to Agraca; the first, fourth, and sixth divisions, were placed at Zibriera, Ribaldera, and Runa, their left in contact with the third, and their right connected with the fifth. Picton occupied Torres Vedras, and watched the line of the Zizandre; while a Spanish corps, under Romana, was posted at Enexara dos Cavalleros. The cavalry, not being required, were cantoned along the second line, and among the villages to the left, where, in the event of an attack, their services might have been valuable.

The experience of a few days showed Massena how very desperate his chances were of deforcing an enemy, who had been already tried on more assailable ground, and tried in vain. Before him, rose the lines of Lisbon; behind, his communications with the Spanish frontier were cut off; Bacellar's army was spread over the country, and every

* Leith Hay.

post the Prince of Essling quitted was immediately occupied by Portuguese irregulars. In three days after he had established his hospitals in Coimbra, that city was surprised by Trant, and five thousand sick and wounded men, with the marine company that guarded them, were captured, and carried to Oporto. British gun-boats filled the Tagus; supplies came freely to the allied camp; for the sea to them was open, and their intercourse with the capital was uninterrupted and direct. People flocked from Lisbon to visit the lines, in all that security which told the ruin of Napoleon's hopes,—and with winter coming fast—an exhausted country to depend on—increasing sickness—disunited officers, and a disheartened soldiery, Massena felt his situation to be one, than which nothing could be more discouraging; for to attack were madness—to retreat, disgraceful—and to remain, impossible. Contrary, however, to every principle of war, the marshal desperately persevered, and for six weeks maintained sixty thousand men and twenty thousand horses, in a country which could not have supplied a British brigade for a week.

Never was the misconduct of the Portuguese government more censurable, than in the apathy which they had evinced in carrying out the measures Lord Wellington had so emphatically recommended; and, in writing to Mr. Stuart, the British general warmly expressed the displeasure it had occasioned.—

“Your note of the 29th is strictly true in all its parts. The French could not have stayed here a week if the provisions had been removed; and the length of time they can now stay depends upon the quantity remaining of what they have found in places from which there existed means of removing every thing, if the quantity had been ten times greater. They are stopped effectually in front; all the roads are occupied; and they can get nothing from their rear; but all the military arrangements are useless, if they can find subsistence on the ground which they occupy.

“For aught I know to the contrary, they may be able to maintain their position till the whole French army is brought to their assistance. It is heart-breaking to contemplate the chance of failure from such obstinacy and folly.”

Never did the circumstances of the times, nor the character of the army to which he was opposed, render, for the security of Lord Wellington, a stern obedience to the spirit of his proclamation so indispensable. It is true that the position of the allied army was every thing but impregnable; but an unforeseen omission—an untoward event—one of those thousand accidents to which war is subject, might, when the gates of success were apparently completely closed, have opened them unexpectedly to a persevering enemy.* The only chances of Massena depended on delay, and those who called themselves the allies of Wellington, gave them to him. No soldiers in the world were better able to turn them to account; and never did the French army exhibit the singular capability of supporting itself, when others would have perished, more strongly than Massena's before the lines of Lisbon. There, indeed, the theory of their discipline was practically illustrated, and Napoleon's fa-

* “I shall ever be of opinion that, if the enemy had determined to sacrifice every thing to the grand object of penetrating our line, and marching on Lisbon, they might very possibly have effected their purpose. It is not to be denied that our position was provided with formidable redoubts and batteries; nevertheless it was a very extensive one, and the defence of it would not altogether have depended upon the abilities of Wellington, or the bravery of the army. The confusion or misapprehension of any one general as to what he was to provide for and protect, the fear of responsibility, and the absence of discretion in a common brigadier, might have neutralized both the talents of the leader and the courage of the men, and proved fatal to our hopes. We should have been more particularly liable to such a misfortune, in the hurry of the first two or three days after we entered the lines, and before the grammar of their defence was thoroughly understood by all our generals. A well-conducted assault would have borne with it the character of a *coup de main*, and must have been decided by musketry and the bayonet. Massena, however, delayed for his artillery, suffered the golden opportunity to escape him; nor did he, when his guns arrived, venture to attack us.”—*Lord Londonderry's Narrative.*

vourite principle carried out, of making "war support war." The following graphic picture of their predatory superiority is thus given by an English historian:* — "Nothing escaped their search. The French soldiers had been so long accustomed to plunder, that they proceeded in their researches for booty of every kind, upon a regular system. They were provided with tools for the work of pillage, and every piece of furniture in which places of concealment could be constructed, they broke open from behind, so that no valuables could be hidden from them by any contrivance of that kind. Having satisfied themselves that nothing was secreted above ground, they proceeded to examine whether there was any new masonry, or if any part of the cellar or ground-floor had been disturbed: if it appeared uneven, they dug there; where there was no such indication, they poured water, and if it were absorbed in one place faster than another, there they broke the earth. There were men, who, at the first glance, could pronounce whether anything had been buried beneath the soil; and when they probed with an iron rod, or, in default of it, with sword or bayonet, it was found that they were seldom mistaken in their judgment. The habit of living by prey called forth, as in beasts, a faculty of discovering it. There was one soldier whose scent became so acute, that, if he approached the place where wine had been concealed, he would go unerringly to the spot."

The war had now assumed an unwonted character; and the question was not how to fight, but how to live. If the Prince of Essling could but obtain supplies, and remain in front of a position, which a careful reconnaissance convinced him that he could neither turn nor carry, some masterly diversion of Napoleon might still enable him to succeed; while Wellington, with admirable judgment, declined active measures, and trusted to starvation. Massena "spread his moveable columns in the rear to seek for provisions, and commenced forming magazines at Santarem,

* Dr. Southey.

where his principal depôt was established ; but Wellington drew down all the militia and ordenanza of the north on the French rear, putting their right in communication with the garrison of Peniché, and their left with the militia of Lower Beira. To strengthen the latter, he prevailed on Carlos d'España to cross the Tagus, and act between Castello Branco and Abrantes ; and thus the French were completely enclosed, without any weakening of the regular army." *

While Lord Wellington was thus pursuing a slow but certain policy, every thing seemed as if united to embarrass it. In the country, Souza, assisted by the patriarch, warped the Regency to what purposes he pleased, and the fruits which the intrigues of the president and priest occasioned, soon produced unequivocal results. From the Portuguese line, the desertions within nine months amounted to as many thousands, while the ordenanza disbanded themselves by whole companies. Famine threatened Lisbon, crowded as it was with fugitives from the country, and prisoners who had been suffered to accumulate. The fortification of the heights of Almeida, which the British engineers had recommended to be immediately completed, was seized on as a pretext for the patriarch to make a popular remonstrance ; and the influence which he possessed over an ignorant and bigoted community, was dangerously exercised to mar the efforts of their deliverer, and cause the British cabinet to be suspected and maligned.

Nor were the home relations of Lord Wellington more encouraging. The English newspapers indulged in the gloomiest predictions, which a course of operations, not easily understood, tended to encourage. Previous to the trial at Busaco, some superior officers had written home in a spirit that breathed any thing but confidence. These letters had, of course, the effect which might have been expected ; and Lord Liverpool, harassed on every hand by evil auguries and mistatements, wrote in his difficulty to Lord

* Napier.

Wellington, and demanded advice and information from him who could best supply them. "Thus beset on every side, the English general rose like a giant. Without noticing either the arguments or the forebodings in these letters, he took a calm historical review of the grounds upon which he had undertaken the defence of Portugal, and which he had before pointed out to the minister he was addressing."* Admirable as his correspondence generally is, either taken in a military or political view, this masterly despatch would show with what clearness and perspicuity† Lord Wellington could explain the varied considerations which influenced his conduct. His letter is dated Pero Negro, 3d Nov. 1810, and addressed to Lord Liverpool:

"I wish it was in my power to give your lordship an opinion of the probable course of the enemy's operations, founded upon the existing state of affairs here, considered in a military point of view; but, from what I am about to state to your lordship, you will observe that it is impossible to form such an opinion.

"The expedition into Portugal was, in my opinion, founded originally upon political and financial, rather than military considerations. It is true that, with a view to the conquest of Spain, there were advantages purely military to be derived from the removal of the British army from Portugal; but I think I could show that it was not essentially necessary to effect that object, particularly after the door into Castille had been closed upon us, by the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida.

"The political object, therefore, in removing us from Portugal, which was the effect that our evacuation of the Peninsula would have had upon the inhabitants of Spain in general, and upon those of Cadiz in particular, and the

* Napier.

† "This remarkable letter exists, and were all other records of Lord Wellington's genius to be lost, it would alone suffice to vindicate his great reputation to posterity."—*Ibid.*

financial object, which was the possession and plunder of Lisbon and Oporto, were the principal motives for the perseverance in the expedition into Portugal. I believe the latter to have been more pressing even than the former.

“It is impossible to describe to your lordship the pecuniary and other distresses of the French armies in the Peninsula. All the troops are months in arrears of pay; they are in general very badly clothed; their armies want horses, carriages, and equipments of every description; their troops subsist solely upon plunder, whether acquired individually, or more regularly by the way of requisition and contribution; they receive no money, or scarcely any, from France; and they realise but little from their pecuniary contributions in Spain. Indeed, I have lately discovered that the expense of the pay and the hospitals alone of the French army in the Peninsula, amounts to more than the sum stated in the financial *exposé* as the whole expense of the entire French army.

“This state of things has very much weakened, and in some instances destroyed, the discipline of the army; and all the intercepted letters advert to acts of malversation and corruption, and misapplication of stores, &c., by all the persons attached to the army.

“I have no doubt, therefore, that the desire to relieve this state of distress, and to remove the consequent evils occasioned by it, by the plunder of Lisbon and Oporto, was the first motive for the expedition into Portugal.

“The expedition, not having been founded upon any military necessity, has been carried on and persevered in against every military principle. We know that Massena could expect no immediate reinforcements; and, without adverting to the various errors, which I believe he would acknowledge he had committed in the course of the service, he has persevered in it, after he found that he was unable to force the troops opposed to him, when posted in a strong position, and when he knew that they had one still

stronger in their rear, to which they were about to retire; and that they were likely to be reinforced, while his army would be still further weakened by sickness, and by the privations to which he knew they must be liable on their march. He knew that the whole country was against him; that a considerable corps was formed upon the Douro, which would immediately operate upon his rear; that at the time of the battle of Busaco he had no longer any communication with Spain; and that every step he took further in advance, was a step towards additional difficulty and inconvenience, from which the retreat would be almost impossible.

“If the expedition into Portugal had been founded upon military principle only, it would have ended at Busaco; and I do not hesitate to acknowledge that I expected that Massena would retire from thence, or at all events would not advance beyond the Mondego. But he has continued to advance, contrary to every military principle; and I, therefore, conclude that the pressure of financial distresses, which was the original motive for the expedition, was that for persevering in it, and may operate upon the measures of the present moment.

“In this view of the case, it is probable that Massena may endeavour to maintain his position, as long as he can keep alive any proportion of his troops, being certain that the same difficulties which induced the emperor to undertake the expedition without any military necessity, would induce him to make every effort to reinforce him at the earliest possible period of time, and therefore that he will remain some time longer where he is.

“Your lordship is already acquainted with the means of reinforcing him. There is no doubt that by raising the siege of Cadiz, and abandoning other unattainable objects, Massena may be reinforced to a very considerable extent.

“Under these circumstances, I have frequently turned over in my mind the expediency of attacking the French army now in my front, before it should be joined by its

reinforcements; and, upon the whole, I am inclined to be of opinion that I ought not to do so.

“ I enclose your lordship an account of the number of battalions, squadrons, &c., which entered Portugal with Massena, and I cannot believe that they composed an army of less than 70,000 men at the battle of Busaco. I calculate their loss, including sick, since that time, at 15,000 men, which would leave them with 55,000 men, of which 6,000 or 7,000 are cavalry, at the present moment.

“ The effective strength of the British army, according to the last returns, was 29,000 infantry, cavalry and artillery, and one regiment at Lisbon, and one at Torres Vedras, which, in the view of the contest, ought not to be taken into the account; and I enclose a statement of the Portuguese force, according to the last returns.

“ Besides this force, the Marques de la Romana's corps consists of about 5,000 men; making a total of 58,615, of which I could command the services in case I should act offensively against the enemy, of which about* would be cavalry.

“ Besides these troops, there are different bodies of militia, infantry, and artillery, in our positions; but I should deceive myself if I could expect, and your lordship if I should state, that any advantage would be derived from their assistance in an offensive operation against the enemy.

“ Although the enemy's position is not so strong as that which we occupy, there is no doubt but that it has its advantages; one of which is, that, in attacking it, we could hardly use our artillery. I would also observe that, in every operation of this description by the British army in Portugal, no attempt can be made to manœuvre upon the enemy's flank or rear; first, because the enemy show they are indifferent about their flanks or rear, or their communications; and, secondly, because the inevitable consequence of attempting such a manœuvre would be to open

* Blank in the original. The allied cavalry might be rated at 5,000.

some one or other road to Lisbon, and to our shipping, of which the enemy would take immediate advantage to attain his object.

“ We must carry their positions, therefore, by main force, and consequently with loss; and, in the course of the operations, I must draw the army out of their cantonments: I must expose the troops and horses to the inclemencies of the weather at this season of the year, and must look to all the consequences of that measure, in increased sickness of the men, and in loss of efficiency and condition in horses.

“ I observe that, notwithstanding the length of time which has elapsed since the greatest and most efficient part of the French army has been employed against us, there is yet no other military body in the Peninsula which is capable of taking, much less of keeping, the field; and the relief of Cadiz, which appears to me to be a probable consequence of the state of affairs here, would not give us the assistance of an army from that quarter, either in the way of co-operation or of diversion; nor would the removal of Sebastiani from Granada, which would be the consequence of the relief of Cadiz, enable Blake to make any progress beyond the Sierra Morena towards Madrid. We should still stand alone in the Peninsula as an army; and, if I should succeed in forcing Massena's positions, it would become a question whether I should be able to maintain my own, in case the enemy should march another army into this country. But, when I observe how small the superiority of numbers is in my favour, and know that the position will be in favour of the enemy, I cannot but be of opinion that I act in conformity with the instructions and intentions of his Majesty's government, in waiting for the result of what is going on, and in incurring no extraordinary risk.

“ Every day's delay, at this season of the year, narrows our line of defence, and consequently strengthens it; and when the winter shall have set in, no number, however

formidable, can venture to attack it; and the increase of the enemy's numbers at that period will only add to their distress, and increase the difficulties of their retreat.

"I have thought it proper to make your lordship acquainted with the course of my reflections upon this subject, and my present determination, which I hope will be consistent with the wishes of his Majesty's government. Circumstances may change: the enemy's distresses for provisions, and the operations of our detachments in his rear, may induce him to detach to such a degree, as to render a general attack upon him a measure of positive advantage, in which case I shall alter my determination. But adverting to the necessity of placing the troops in the field in this season if I should make any attack, the advantage must be very obvious before I adopt a measure which must be attended by the consequence of losing the services of my men by sickness."

There never was a stronger instance of that wilful blindness and profligate contempt of truth, which the virulence of party too frequently produces, than the ignorance and falsity which teemed in England from the opposition press. According to their assertions, Massena was blessed with abundance, and Wellington reduced to actual extremity. The humanity which induced the latter to recommend to the benevolence of the British nation that portion of the Portuguese population, who, in obedience to his mandate, had abandoned their homes and sacrificed their property, was used by the journalists of the day as a means of arming Massena with "a starving multitude," to force for maintenance upon the lines.* The

* "The Portuguese," he pleaded, "had already received the benefit of the charitable disposition of his Majesty's subjects, and there never was a case in which their assistance was required in a greater degree, whether the sufferings of the people, or their fidelity to the cause they have espoused, and their attachment to his Majesty's subjects be considered

"I declare, that I have scarcely known an instance, in which any person in

Prince of Essling, as they averred, had "an immense track of country as yet untouched," from which to obtain supplies; and the allies, with famine in their rear, and an overwhelming enemy in their front, possessed the ground alone, which was crowned by their artillery or occupied by their battalions. It was hoped—so said the newspapers—that Wellington would not dream of remaining throughout the winter on those barren heights; he might probably still embark his army with but little loss,—and the sooner it was effected, the better.

But how very different were the relative situations of the armies now opposed! By personal observation, the Prince of Essling was convinced that his rival's position was unassailable, and he accordingly rejected Junot's proposition of hazarding an attack upon the great redoubt, as a wild and dangerous experiment. Indeed, he was seriously embarrassed, for, contrary to Ney's remonstrances, he had obstinately sate down before lines, against which all military considerations should have deterred him from advancing. The reconnaissance he had made produced only loss of life, and confirmed previous suspicions that any efforts to deforce the allies were hopeless. All that remained for "the spoiled child of victory" was to communicate his situation to Napoleon, explain his difficulties, and demand further assistance and advice. General Foy was accordingly despatched to Paris—and Massena endeavoured to await the issue of his mission, and maintain his army as he best could, in front of the lines of Lisbon.

Portugal, even of the lowest order, has had communication with the enemy inconsistent with his duty to his sovereign, or with the orders he had received.

"I would, therefore, beg leave to recommend the unfortunate portion of the inhabitants who have suffered from the enemy's invasion, to your Lordship's protection; and I request you to consider of the mode of recommending them to the benevolent disposition of his Majesty's subjects, at the moment, which I hope may not be far distant, that the enemy may be under the necessity of evacuating the country."—*Letter to Lord Liverpool.*

His own military experience would most probably have induced the Prince of Essling to have adopted a different course, had not the prudence of the soldier been lost in the vanity of the man. To none, with the exception of the emperor, had the lottery of a revolution been more propitious—and none had been more inflated by adventitious success. His advent to Portugal had been vauntingly announced, and his own proclamations were framed in unison with the boastings of the *Moniteur*. Now he was painfully committed.—“Had he confined his views, if not previously to his defeat at Busaco, at all events after that event occurred, to the north of Portugal, taking up the line of the Mondego for the winter, and detaching a corps to occupy Oporto, he would have made himself master of a portion of the country; and making the most of his successes at Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, would have obtained credit for having accomplished a tolerably brilliant campaign. But that opportunity was gone by; he had been repulsed at Busaco; he had passed the Mondego, with a perfect knowledge all the while that his communications would become at every step more uncertain; he saw the whole militia of Portugal rising in his rear, and yet left his sick at Coimbra, without a sufficient garrison to protect them. He had done all this, not that he might follow his enemy with vigour, for the pursuit was so deliberate, that all the stragglers, and almost all the baggage, escaped uninjured; and now he lay perfectly inactive in their front.”*

Every hour his situation became more unpromising,—for as the supplies grew scarcer, the difficulty to obtain them proportionately increased, and there was not a point on which Massena could move his foragers without encountering an enemy. Carlos d’Espana had interrupted all communications between Castello Branco and Abrantes. Some Spanish light troops and British cavalry were at Ramalhal. In Obidos, a daring partisan (Fenwick) had a

* Lord Londonderry’s Narrative.

force. Waters, with indefatigable activity, was cutting off marauding parties. Near the lines, Wilson infested the country from Espinhal to the Zezere; and every day proved that Wellington's assurances to Lord Liverpool were hurrying with rapidity to their accomplishment. "But war is a curious and complicated web; and while the purely military part was thus happily situated and strong, the political part was one of weakness and alarm."

The precarious resources of the enemy exposed them to the severest privations; even French ingenuity failed in discovering concealed magazines; for in fact, the country contained more. Hunger, cold, and fatigue, produced disease. As the season advanced, Massena's army became more sickly, and more dispirited; and every deserter who passed the British outposts, described the situation of the French soldiery as deplorable.

On the other hand, within the lines, neither scarcity was felt, nor danger apprehended. "Nor was Lord Wellington inattentive to the comforts, and even luxuries of his followers. Provisions were abundant; there was no want of wine; and sports and amusements went on as if we had been, not at the seat of war, but in England.* Officers of all ranks, and in every department, from the commander-in-chief down to the regimental subaltern, occasionally enjoyed the field-sports of hunting, shooting, and fishing. The men, too, had their pastimes, when not employed on duty; in a word, seldom has an army, occupying ground in the face of its enemy, enjoyed so many hours of relaxation, or contrived to unite so completely the pleasures of country life with the serious business of war. It is probably needless to add, that so great a show of security in their leader had the best possible effect upon the temper of the troops; or that the moral of the army was

* While the opposition Journals described Wellington as starving, he was occasionally engaged in hunting—a charge afterwards brought against him by the Souza faction—and in giving entertainments at Mafra, on the occasion of investing Marshal Beresford with the order of the Bath.

sustained, not more by a contemplation of things as they really were, than by a conviction that they must be going on prosperously, otherwise so much relaxation could not abound.”*

It was, however, a singular circumstance, that at no period of the campaign, desertions from the British regiments were so numerous; and nothing proves more strongly how radically bad the *matériel* of the army was. There was nothing to palliate the crime; for, with ample supplies, the soldiery had nothing to perform beyond the ordinary duties of a camp. Lord Wellington thus notices to Lord Liverpool the prevalence of this offence:—

“ I enclose the weekly state of the army to the 1st instant. There is no sickness in the army of any importance. The number of men actually in the hospital is below 4000; the others returned sick, absent, are at the convalescent dépôt at Belem. The continued badness of the weather renders it necessary to keep the soldiers, when dismissed from the hospital, rather longer at Belem than it otherwise would be.

“ Your Lordship will be concerned to observe the continued, and I am concerned to add, increasing desertion of British soldiers to the enemy, a crime which, till within the last few years, was almost unknown in the army.

“ It is difficult to account for the prevalence of this crime—particularly in this army lately. The British soldiers see the deserters from the enemy coming into their lines daily, all with a story of the unparalleled distresses which their army are suffering, and of the loss of all hope of success in the result of their enterprise, at the same time that they know and feel that they are suffering no hardship or distress; that there is not an article of food or clothing which can contribute to their health and comfort that is not provided for them; that they are well lodged and taken care of in every respect, and not fatigued by work or duty, and having every prospect of success.

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative—Despatches 4th and 9th, Nov. 1810.

"The deserters from the British regiments are principally Irishmen; and I attribute the prevalence of the crime very much to the bad description of men in all the regiments which are drafted from the Irish militia; and also to the irregular habits which many soldiers had acquired, and had communicated to others, in the retreat of the army through the north of Spain in the winter of 1808-9; and in their subsequent service in the French army, and in their wandering through the country back again into Portugal."

In the meanwhile the conduct of the Regency became more intolerable; and they acted as if their object was to support and not distress the enemy.* Unfortunately an old decree of the Prince Regent was extant, which encouraged private disclosures to be made against persons suspected of disaffection towards the government, with a

* Lord Wellington had emphatically advised the destruction of the mills, and removal of every boat upon the Tagus to secure the Alentejo from being invaded, and prevent Massena from obtaining access to the islands—and particularly Lizirias, where a large supply of provisions might be procured. The patriarch and his associates could not openly object to measures whose necessity was so apparent; but they interposed so many obstacles and delays, that the French were enabled to possess themselves of forty large boats, and an abundance of both corn and cattle. In a letter to Admiral Berkeley, the British general thus alludes to this most unpardonable proceeding:—

"In whichever way the boats may be used, their loss is a serious misfortune; and, at all events, the whole of the Alentejo lies at the mercy of the enemy.

"The government may congratulate themselves upon this notable arrangement. They would not adopt in time any one measure to remove what might be useful or necessary to the enemy. They neglected their peculiar business, to occupy themselves with what did not concern them; and there is not an arrangement of any description which depended upon them, or their officers, which has not failed.

"At this moment the enemy are living upon grain found close to the lines; and they grind it into flour with the mills in our sight, which the government were repeatedly pressed to order the people to render useless, and which could have been rendered useless only by taking away the sails.

"Then the boats are left at Santarem, in order to give the enemy an opportunity of acting upon our flank, and thus dislodging us."—*Despatch, Pero Negro, 16th Oct. 1810.*

guarantee of secrecy as to the informant. This system had been infamously resorted to; nightly arrests were made by order of the patriarch and his confederates, and forty-eight persons were torn from their families and homes, and thrown into the Limœira* among thieves and murderers, or placed *au secret* in the tower of St. Julian. This atrocious proceeding aroused the indignation of the inhabitants of Lisbon to a pitch of fury, which, with all the mob popularity he had acquired, the patriarch dreaded to encounter; and to shelter himself from its effects, he and his party basely insinuated that they had acted in accordance with Lord Wellington's advice. For a while these charges against the British general were partially believed; and irritated, with great justice, at the treachery and falsehood of the Regency, he addressed the following letter to Lord Liverpool:—

“ Having observed that I am supposed to have advised the measures recently adopted by the regency in Portugal, in respect to certain individuals who have been sent out of the kingdom; and as I know that credit is given to calumnies of this description, and that they are frequently repeated, and brought forward in the shape of charges against those who are serving his Majesty abroad, I am desirous that your lordship should be informed how this matter really stands.

“ The first I heard of the arrest of the persons in question, was from public report, and from the Portuguese newspapers. The secretary of the regency afterwards sent me a paper upon the subject, (of which I enclose a copy,) to which I wrote the answer, expressing my disapprobation of the measure, of which I enclose the draft.

“ I am decidedly of opinion that the Portuguese government had no reason for arresting these individuals, excepting a desire to gratify the populace by an act of vigour against those supposed to be well-wishers of, and partisans

* The common jail of Lisbon.

of the French. It is impossible for me to say whether they are so or not; but I am very certain that they had it not in their power to do any mischief, and that their sudden arrest and transportation for crimes not stated, were calculated to do much injury at the time, by creating general suspicion and mistrust.

“ I am afraid that the Portuguese government, after they had carried this measure into execution, and had found that commiseration for the sufferings of individuals had excited the disapprobation of many persons in Lisbon of the whole proceedings, gave their sanction to the reports which were circulated by their friends, that it had been adopted at the suggestion of the British authorities; although they had adopted it, not only without consulting any of us, but had persevered in carrying it into execution, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his Majesty’s minister, and of the admiral; and they knew that I disapproved of it entirely.”*

The mischiefs which the Portuguese government occasioned, had all but destroyed that army on whose organization so much care had been bestowed, and so much English money been expended. The timely provision of magazines for their support had been neglected—and no alternative was left Lord Wellington but to see these regiments disband themselves, or to maintain them from his own resources. Desertion was a crime chiefly to be dreaded in a young army like the Portuguese, when quartered in its own country—and strong ordinances had been promulgated to punish this dangerous offence; but the civil authorities always evaded taking cognizance of the offenders, and thus gave a passive encouragement to the commission of that crime. Nor was the misconduct of the regency comprised in mere sins of omission; Souza was constantly recommending the adoption of the most ridiculous experiments—and among others, he proposed an

* Wellington Despatches.

absurd plan of forming ambuscades on the banks of the Tagus. Had his folly been confined to idle theories, it would have been a matter of little moment, but the governor of Setuval "adopted the idea, and suddenly advanced with his garrison to Salvaterra, on the river side.

"This ridiculous movement attracted the enemy's attention; and Lord Wellington, fearing they would pass over a detachment, disperse the Portuguese troops, and seize Setuval before it could be succoured, peremptorily ordered the governor to return to that fortress. This retrograde movement caused the dispersion of the ordenanza, and consternation reigned in the Alentejo. The supply of grain coming from Spain was stopped, the chain of communications broken, and, the alarm spreading to Lisbon, there was no remedy but to send General Fane, with some guns and Portuguese cavalry, that could be ill spared from the lines to that side. Fane immediately destroyed all the boats he could find, hastened the removal of provisions, and patrolling the banks of the river as high as the mouth of the Zezere, kept a strict watch upon the enemy's movements."*

All these things were sufficiently provoking; and while Lord Wellington detailed his every-day annoyances to the British cabinet, he contented himself with remedying mischief as it happened, and imploring the regency to prevent its recurrence; but afterwards when the poverty of the government obliged them to resort to requisitions in kind for the maintenance of the army, the patriarch actually threw the odium of this unpopular measure upon the British general, declaring that he would not permit burthens to be placed upon his people, for no purpose but "to nourish war in the heart of the kingdom."

This wanton aggravation of past offendings could not be overlooked; and Lord Wellington addressed the following remonstrance to Mr. Stuart: —

* Napier.

" SIR,

" Cartazo, January 18, 1811.

" I have had the honour of receiving your letter of the 17th instant, to the greater part of which I shall give an answer at a future opportunity; but it is necessary that I should draw your attention, and that of the Portuguese government, upon the earliest occasion, to the sentiments which have dropped from the patriarch in recent discussions at the meetings of the regency.

" It appears that his Eminence has expatiated on the inutility of laying fresh burthens on the people, ' which were evidently for no other purpose than to nourish a war in the heart of the kingdom.' It must be recollected that these discussions are not those of a popular assembly: they can scarcely be deemed of the nature of those of a ministerial council; but they are those of the persons whom his royal highness the Prince Regent has called to govern his kingdom, in the existing crisis of his affairs. I have always been in the habit of considering his eminence the patriarch as one of those in Portugal who are of opinion that all sacrifices ought to be made, provided the kingdom could preserve its independence; and I think it most important that the British government, and the government of the Prince Regent, and the world, should be undeceived, if we have been hitherto mistaken.

" His Eminence objects to the adoption of measures which have for their immediate object to procure funds for the maintenance of his royal highness's armies, because a war may exist in the heart of the kingdom; but I am apprehensive that the patriarch forgets the manner in which the common enemy first entered this kingdom in the year 1807; that in which they were expelled from it, having had complete possession of it, in 1808; and that they were again in possession of the city of Oporto, and of the two most valuable provinces of the kingdom, in 1809; and the mode in which they were expelled from those provinces.

“ He forgets it was stated to him in the month of February, 1810, in presence of the Marquez d’Olhao, of Senhor Dom Miguel Forjaz, and of Senhor Dom Joao Antonio Salter de Mendouça, and of Marshal Sir William Beresford, that it was probable that the enemy would invade this kingdom with such an army as that it would be necessary to concentrate all our forces to oppose him with any chance of success; and that this concentration could be made with safety in the neighbourhood of the capital only; and that the general plan of the campaign was communicated to him, which went to bring the enemy into the heart of the kingdom; and that he expressed before these persons his high approbation of it.

“ If he recollected these circumstances, he would observe that nothing had occurred in this campaign that had not been foreseen and provided for by measures of which he had expressed his approbation, whose consequences he now disapproves.

“ The Portuguese nation are involved in a war, not of aggression, or even defence on their part—not of alliance—not in consequence of their adherence to any political system; for they abandoned all alliances, and all political systems, in order to propitiate the enemy.

“ The inhabitants of Portugal made war purely and simply to get rid of the yoke of the tyrant, whose government was established in Portugal, and to save their lives and properties. They chose this lot for themselves, principally at the instigation of his eminence the patriarch; and they called upon his Majesty, the ancient ally of Portugal, (whose alliance had been relinquished at the requisition of the common enemy,) to aid them in the glorious effort which they wished to make to restore the independence of their country, and to secure the lives and properties of its inhabitants.

“ I shall not state the manner in which his Majesty has answered this call, nor enumerate the services rendered to this nation by his army. Whatever may be the result of

the contest, nothing can make me believe that the Portuguese nation will ever forget them; but when a nation have adopted the line of resistance to the tyrant, under the circumstances under which it was unanimously adopted by the Portuguese nation in 1808, and has been persevered in, it cannot be believed that they intended to suffer none of the miseries of war, or that their government act consistently with their sentiments when they expatiate on the inutility of laying fresh burthens on the people, 'which were evidently for no other purpose than to nourish a war in the heart of the kingdom.' The patriarch, in particular, forgets his old principles—his own actions, which have principally involved his country in this contest, when he talks of discontinuing it, because it has again for the third time 'been brought into the heart of the kingdom.'

"Although the patriarch, particularly, and the majority of the existing government, approved of the plan which I explained to them in February, 1810, according to which it was probable that this kingdom would be made the seat of war, which has since occurred; I admit that his Eminence, or any of those members, may fairly disapprove of the operations of the campaign, and of the continuance of the enemy in Portugal.

"I have pointed out to the Portuguese government, in more than one despatch, the difficulties and risks which attended any attack upon the enemy's position in this country; and the probable success, not only to ourselves, but to our allies, of our perseverance in the plan which I had adopted, and had hitherto followed so far successfully, as that the allies have literally sustained no loss of any description; and their army is at this moment more complete than it was at the opening of the campaign in April last. The inhabitants of one part of the country alone have suffered, and are continuing to suffer; but, without entering into discussions, which I wish to avoid upon this occasion, I repeat that, if my counsel had been followed, those sufferings would at least have been alleviated, and I

observe, that it is the first time that I have heard that the sufferings of a part, and but a small part, of any nation have been deemed a reason for refusing to adopt a measure which has for its object the deliverance of the whole.

“ The patriarch may, however, disapprove of the system which I have followed ; and I conceive that he is fully justified in desiring his Majesty and the Prince Regent to remove me from the command of their armies. This would be a measure consistent with his former conduct in this contest, under the circumstances of my having unfortunately fallen in his opinion ; but this measure is entirely distinct from his refusal to concur in laying those burthens on the people which are necessary to carry on and secure the objects of the war.

“ It must be obvious to his Eminence, and to every person acquainted with the real situation of the affairs of Portugal, that, unless a great effort is made by the government to render the resources more adequate to the necessary expenditure, all plans and systems of operations will be alike ; for the Portuguese army will be able to carry on none. At this moment, although all the corps are concentrated in the neighbourhood of their magazines, with means of transport easy by the Tagus, the Portuguese troops are frequently in want of provisions, because there is no money to defray the expenses of transport ; and all the departments of the Portuguese army, including the hospitals, are equally destitute of funds to enable them to defray the necessary expenditure, and to perform their duty. These deficiencies and difficulties have existed ever since I have known the Portuguese army ; and it is well known that it must have been disbanded more than once, if it had not been assisted by the provisions, stores, and funds, destined for the maintenance of the British army.

“ It may likewise occur to his Eminence, that, in proportion as operations of the armies would be more extended, the expense would increase, and the necessity for providing adequate funds to support it would become more urgent ;

unless, indeed, the course of those operations should annihilate at one blow both army and expenditure.

“ The objections, then, to adopt measures to improve the resources of the government, go to decide the question whether the war shall be carried on or not, in any manner.

“ By desiring his Majesty and the Prince Regent to remove me from the command of their armies, his Eminence would endeavour to get rid of a person deemed incapable or unwilling to fulfil the duties of his situation. By objecting to improve the resources of the country, he betrays an alteration of opinion respecting the contest, and a desire to forfeit its advantages, and to give up the independence of his country, and the security of the lives and properties of the Portuguese nation.

“ In my opinion, the patriarch is in such a situation in this country, that he ought to be called upon, on the part of his Majesty, to state distinctly what he meant by refusing to concur in the measures which were necessary to insure the funds to enable this country to carry on the war.

“ At all events, I request that this letter may be communicated to him in the regency; and that a copy of it may be forwarded to his royal highness the Prince Regent, in order that his royal highness may see that I have given his Eminence an opportunity of explaining his motives, either by stating his personal objections to me, or the alteration of his opinions, his sentiments, and his wishes in respect to the independence of his country.”

There never was a priest more anxious to intermeddle with state policy, and never was there one more incompetent than the patriarch; for he wanted the first requisites—discretion and common temper. This bold and manly letter stung him to the quick—and he insulted Mr. Stuart most grossly, and vented his wrath against Lord Wellington in language which, for virulence and vulgarity, should never have escaped from apostolic lips. In despite of his intrigues, the court of the Brazils subsequently confirmed

the authority of Lord Wellington. The British ambassador and Admiral Berkeley were added to the regency—some tools of the patriarch were displaced—honest men succeeded—and, armed with an authority that rarely has been granted to an individual, to use the strong language of Colonel Napier, Wellington “grasped the whole power of Portugal with one hand, while he kept the power of France at bay with the other.”



CHAPTER XIV.

MASSENA RETREATS FROM THE LINES—MASTERLY MOVEMENTS OF THE FRENCH MARSHAL—UNCERTAINTY OF LORD WELLINGTON—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—SANTAREM—ITS STRENGTH AS A POSITION—MOVEMENT OF REYNIER—WELLINGTON DECLINES ATTACKING MASSENA—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE ALLIES AND THE FRENCH—MASSENA'S REASONS FOR REMAINING IN PORTUGAL—GARDANNE RETREATS, AND DROUET ADVANCES—OPERATIONS OF THE PARTISANS—SILVIERA DEFEATED—INDUCEMENTS FOR LORD WELLINGTON TO OFFER BATTLE, AND REASONS WHY HE SHOULD DECLINE ONE—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—REFLECTIONS.

WHILE Lord Wellington was thus engaged in crushing a corrupt administration abroad, and confirming a desponding government at home, the event he had predicted was accomplished, and Massena, abandoning his position, retired from before the British lines. If, as all must admit, he had committed a serious error in making an imprudent advance, his retreat was worthy of his former reputation—and illustrated, in a striking degree, those military qualities which Napoleon affirmed that Massena so eminently possessed.

His operations were effected with extraordinary secrecy—and they were so ably planned, that they tended to encourage a belief that the Prince of Essling was preparing to resume the offensive, rather than to recede from the position he had so long and so uselessly blockaded.

Having previously despatched his hospitals and heavy baggage to Santarem, repaired the bridge over the Zezere at Punhete, which had been swept away by the floods, and constructed a second one at Martinchel, he despatched strong detachments to Pombal, while the cavalry of

Montbrun patrolled the country towards Leyria. The sixth corps was removed to Thomar, and Loison, reinforced with a brigade of dragoons, marched to Golegao.

As there was a dangerous defile in the rear of Alemquer, to retire the eighth corps from before the lines was a difficult operation, the whole position being domineered by the Monte Agraca. The movement was accordingly made during the night; and when the mists slowly cleared away on the morning of the 15th of November, the huts which the French division had occupied were found abandoned. At dusk, Clausel had removed his posts, and, covered by a strong rear-guard, cleared the defile without molestation; while Solignac, taking the route to Santarem, retired by the royal causeway from Alhandra—the eighth corps marching on Torres Novas, the second halting at Santarem.

Nothing could be more uncertain than the intentions of the French marshal, and Lord Wellington felt, that by an incautious movement, his army must be seriously committed—Massena's retreat might only be a feint to draw the allies from their position—while by turning Monte Junta, he might make a sudden rush on Torres Vedras. The army, excepting the 2d and light divisions, was accordingly kept in hand by the British general; and while he awaited the clearer development of his opponent's designs, he thus described to Lord Liverpool the movements of both the enemy and himself:—

“ On the 18th, the British cavalry and the advanced guard found the enemy's rear-guard so strongly posted in front of Santarem, that it was impossible to attack them with any prospect of success; and although my posts on the left of the Tagus have informed me that the enemy continue to send troops and baggage along the road on the right bank towards the Zezere, their rear-guard have still maintained their post; and they have, evidently, in that post, and in Santarem, a sufficient body of troops to enable them to hold the strong position of

Santarem against any attack which I might make on its front.

“ At the same time, the rain, which has been so very heavy since the 15th, has so completely destroyed the roads and filled the rivulets, that I have hitherto found it impossible to dislodge the enemy from his position at Santarem, by movements through the hills on his right flank. The bad state of the roads has also possibly been the cause of the enemy remaining at Santarem so long.

“ Although the enemy have moved large bodies of troops to the eastward from Santarem, I have not yet heard that any large numbers have crossed the Zezere. I cannot be certain, therefore, that their intention is to retire from Portugal entirely. Their army being collected between Santarem and the Zezere, they are in a situation to be able—and they may endeavour—to maintain themselves in that strong position till the reinforcements, which I know are on the frontier, can join them; and for this reason, and because I was unwilling to expose to the inclemencies of the weather a larger body of troops than it was absolutely necessary to employ to press upon the enemy's rear, and to support the advanced guard, I have kept in reserve a considerable proportion of the allied army, some of them still in the cantonments in the line of our fortified positions.

“ I have also ordered General Hill to halt the head of his corps at Chamusca, on the left of the Tagus, till the enemy's movement shall have been decided.

“ I have not heard from General Silveira, who is on the frontier of Upper Beira, since the 9th instant, and he then informed me of the movements of different bodies of troops, which I suppose to be 20,000 men in Castile, apparently levying contributions of provisions, &c. for the army in Portugal. These accounts have been confirmed by others of a later date, the 13th instant, from Salamanca.

“ Having advanced from the positions in which I was enabled to bring the enemy to a stand, and to oblige them to retire without venturing upon any attack, it is but justice

to Lieut. Colonel Fletcher, and the officers of the royal engineers, to draw your lordship's attention to the ability and diligence with which they have executed the works by which these positions have been strengthened to such a degree, as to render any attack upon that line occupied by the allied army very doubtful, if not entirely hopeless. The enemy's army may be reinforced, and they may again induce me to think it expedient, in the existing state of affairs in the Peninsula, to resume these positions; but I do not believe they have it in their power to bring such a force against us as to render the contest a matter of doubt. We are indebted for these advantages to Lieut. Colonel Fletcher, and the officers of the royal engineers, among whom I must particularly mention Captain Chapman, who has given me great assistance upon various occasions.

“Your lordship will have observed how much the effective strength of the army, in proportion to its total numbers, has increased lately. There is no sickness in the army of any importance; and above one half of those returned as sick in the military returns are convalescents, who are retained at Belem, till they shall have gained sufficient strength to bear the fatigues of marching, and of their duty in the field.

“Besides the allied army, I enclose the copies of a correspondence which I have had with Admiral Berkeley, from which your lordship will observe, that an additional force had been provided from the fleet; and I take this occasion of informing your lordship that, in every instance, I have received the most cordial and friendly assistance from Admiral Berkeley, and the officers and men of the squadron under his command. Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Williams has even done me the favour to come up the Tagus to superintend the passage of General Hill's corps over the river.” *

The French retreat was now clearly ascertained to have been a decided and well-concerted operation,—and in the

* Despatch, dated Cartaxo, November 21, 1810.

belief that Massena intended to cross the Zezere by his bridges, and abandon Portugal altogether, Hill's corps was ordered across the Tagus, to move in that case on Abrantes, while Wellington himself, supposing that Santarem was merely occupied by a rear-guard, determined to force that position.

This city stands upon a height which rises abruptly from the Tagus, and stretching about a league to the north, furnishes a steep and difficult position. "The walls of Santarem form the left of it; in front of this important height, a range of lower eminences, covered by the streams of the Rio Mayor, mask the main position, furnishing excellent outposts. The ground between these and a hostile force advancing by the great road from Lisbon, is a naked open flat, traversed for the last eight hundred yards by a raised causeway. By this alone Santarem can be approached; as on one side of the Ponte Seca is a deep wet marsh, quite impassable; and on the other, which extends to the Tagus, it is covered with reeds and sedges, and deep water-cuts, so as to make the passage of it extremely difficult for either horse or foot, and impracticable for guns."*

The causeway had been secured in front of the French position by a strong abatis, while a height which dominated it was crowned with a battery, whose fire would have swept it from end to end. This difficult passage, when forced, would have only brought the assailants before a range of heights overlooked by a bolder eminence; each was a strong position in itself, and all were to be carried before the town of Santarem could be assaulted.

A movement of Reynier's corps had led General Fane to forward a report to Lord Wellington, that the French were retreating on the Zezere. The former, finding himself separated completely from the eighth corps, and fearing that his division might in consequence be cut off, moved his sick and wounded men rapidly on Golegao, after sending his cavalry to observe the bridges of the Rio Mayor, by

* Sherer.

which route he feared that Lord Wellington would advance. This induced the allied General to conclude that Santarem was not held in force, and on the 19th he made all necessary arrangements to attack it.

Fortunately, a part of the artillery had not arrived ; and, although the dispositions were in every thing besides complete, he waited for the arrival of the guns. That pause was fortunate ; and the eagle glance of Wellington detected appearances that bespoke preparations for a determined stand. It was evident that the position would be obstinately maintained. " Every advantageous spot of ground was fully occupied ; the most advanced sentinels boldly returned the fire of the skirmishers ; large bodies of reserve were descried, some in arms, others cooking ; the strokes of the hatchet, and the fall of trees, resounded from the woods clothing the hills ; and the commencement of a triple line of abatis, and the fresh earth of entrenchments, were discernible in many places."*

Lord Wellington was convinced by the observations he made upon the following day, that the system he had himself pursued was now ably resorted to by his rival. Massena had the same advantages at Santarem, that Wellington had possessed at Torres Vedras ; and as flank movements were impracticable—the routes being so broken up during winter, as to render the manœuvring of heavy masses an impossibility—the British General determined to canton his troops, and patiently abide the issue. In a letter to Lord Liverpool, dated Cartaxo, 1st Dec. 1810, he writes thus :—

" The weather has continued to be very bad since the middle of November, and the cross roads are impassable for artillery, and very difficult for infantry, and the rivulets much swollen. Under these circumstances it would be still impossible to make any movement of importance upon the right flank of the enemy's position at Santarem, in the course of which some divisions of troops would not be

* Napier.

insulated and exposed to be cut off. But the enemy having concentrated their army in the neighbourhood of Torres Novas, &c., I do not propose to make any movement by which I shall incur the risk of involving the army in a general action, in ground less advantageous than that which I had fixed upon to bring the contest to that issue. The enemy can be relieved from the difficulties of their situation only by the occurrence of some misfortune to the allied army; and I shall forward their views by placing the fate of the campaign on the result of a general action on ground chosen by them, instead of on that selected by me. I therefore propose to continue the operations of the light detachments on the flanks and rear of the enemy's army, and to confine them as much as possible; but to engage in no serious affair in this part of the country on ground on which the result can be at all doubtful."

In accordance with these views, the allied divisions were placed in cantonments at Alcoentre, Alemquer, and Villa Franca; Cartaxo being made head quarters. Torres Vedras was secured against surprise; and the works at Alhandra Aruda, and Monte Agraca, additionally strengthened, until the lines of Lisbon were rendered every thing but impregnable. To prevent any communication between Soult and Massena—an operation not unlikely to be attempted, as the former was known to be in considerable strength behind the Sierra Morena—the left bank of the Tagus was jealously secured by Marshal Beresford with a disposable corps, consisting of two brigades of cavalry, two divisions of infantry, and twenty guns. His head quarters were at Chamusca—but his brigades were extended along the river, from Almeirim to the mouth of the Zezere.

To prevent any sudden outbreak from Santarem, the light division, supported by a cavalry brigade, were posted on the heights which overlooked the marshes that surround the place; and the causeway—by which alone Massena could move troops forward—was secured by mining the

bridge at its extremity, fortifying the hill that commanded it, and forming an intrenchment sufficient to contain a regiment. To the left of Vallé, a chain of posts extended by Malhorquija along a range of hills to Rio Mayor; Anson's cavalry watched the roads from Pernes and Alcanhede, and a division of infantry held an intrenched position at Alcoentre—thus effectually securing the approaches to the lines from Monte Junta to the Tagus.

Massena, in the mean time, had permanently fixed his head-quarters at Torres Novas, fortified Punhete in his rear, and thus secured his bridge upon the Zezere. His front was safe while the rains continued—a flooded country affording a sufficient protection. This position had every advantage, as his troops were well in hand, and on several points, that of his opponent was vulnerable. He had also two lines open for retreating, by which, at the same time, he could communicate with the Spanish frontier, and cover the advance of any troops or supplies which might be forwarded from the rear. He knew that a convoy was on its march, and he was apprized that strong reinforcements, including the ninth corps under Drouet, might be hourly expected. Lastly, he could avail himself of assistance from the French army in Andalusia; while an extensive tract of country, which unfortunately had been but partially wasted by its inhabitants, afforded an ample field over which his marauding parties might range, and thus enable him to await Foy's return with orders from the emperor, and receive the immense additions to his *corps d'armée*, which he had good reason to believe were already in march to join him.

Political considerations, added to a soldier's pride, were sufficient inducements to keep Massena in Portugal so long as he could subsist himself. While he held a position in the country, none could say that Lisbon was secure, or that Oporto was not open to aggression. The occupation of a portion of the kingdom increased the sufferings of a starving population, fostered discontent, encouraged dis-

affection, and gave reason to question the ultimate chances of British success. In England, the effect was still more powerful. The unfortunate malady of the king rendered the appointment of a regency unavoidable. An opposition, dangerous before, had thus obtained an accidental accession to their strength. The anti-war-cry was at its height; and if ministers were obliged to yield to the political pressure at home, the first act of their successors would be to retire from that contest altogether, which they had so often and so emphatically pronounced to be only a hopeless expenditure of blood and treasure. All these considerations, therefore, confirmed Massena's resolution to hold his present position to the last.

The arrival of the convoy which the French marshal had expected from Castile, was unexpectedly prevented. It had moved from Ciudad Rodrigo, protected by a corps of five thousand men, under the command of General Gardanne—and passing the frontier, it reached Cardijas safely; and now, within a march of the *Zezere*, danger might have been considered as ended. Grant, however, with an ordenanza force, suddenly attacked the French general—and Gardanne, deceived by the report of a peasant, who assured him that Massena had retreated, and that Hill's corps was actually in Abrantes, hastily retired. Nothing could justify the hurried manner in which he conducted his retreat; for, besides a serious loss in men, the larger portion of the supplies he was escorting fell into the hands of the partisans.

Drouet also, reached the frontier with the ninth corps; and urged forward by Foy, who had returned from his mission to the emperor, determined to restore the communications with the prince of Essling, which had been hitherto interrupted. He advanced, accordingly, with a corps ten thousand strong—leaving another, of eight thousand, under Claparade at Guarda, to keep Silveira in check.

Wilson, who had been driven from Cabacos, acted with

his usual promptitude and success. Recrossing the Mondego, he followed Drouet so closely, that his videts were entering Foz d'Aronce as the French rear guard was leaving the village. Trant, also, with part of the garrison of Coimbra, operated in the direction of Miranda de Corvo, the partisan chiefs thus maintaining a desultory but troublesome warfare, until, in accordance with Massena's orders, Count d'Erlon established himself at Leyria.

Silviera rashly fell upon Claparade's advanced guard at Ponte d'Abade, was easily repulsed, attacked in turn, and driven from Villar de Ponte to Lamego. Upper Beira was now at the mercy of the enemy—for Silviera had retired precipitately across the Douro. A movement of Trant and Miller on that river, while Bacellar took a position on the Payva, prevented, however, the French general from following up his advantage, and obliged him to secure his communications with Almeida, by retiring once more to Guarda.

If ever a general was prompted by personal considerations to act in opposition to his judgment, that man was Wellington. By following the cautious system which prudence pointed out, he was tolerably certain that success would crown his efforts; and he was equally convinced that in the mean while, his motives would be mistaken, and his military reputation traduced. If he could but win another battle—and there was a fair presumption that a trial would prove fortunate—"a victory would have silenced his opponents, both in England and Portugal, and placed him in a situation to dictate the measures of war to the ministers, instead of having to struggle incessantly against their fears."

Other motives might have formed a sufficient plea to justify the adoption of active operations. Humanity would influence Lord Wellington to risk a battle, were it only to relieve the distresses of the Portuguese, now suffering intensely from the presence of an army, whose rapacity and licentiousness increased with the privations their numbers

and their wants produced. Military policy might equally dictate that course. He was aware that Massena's reinforcements must greatly exceed any that he could expect. In Castile, a corps had assembled under Count d'Erlon, and Soult and Mortier were in active preparation in Andalusia. A blow might be struck, however, before, by any of these accessions, the strength of Massena should be increased. If it succeeded—the French would merely be driven back upon reinforcements already on the frontier; and the junction of one corps would amply replace the losses of an action. If he advanced, therefore, every step he took removed him farther from supplies attainable only from the ocean—while, with an improvident army, he must cross an exhausted country, from which all that rapine and ingenuity could glean, had been already gathered with an unpitying hand.

These were to be the fruits of victory—but what would have been the consequences of defeat? Probably the loss of the Lines—and, in that event, the loss of Lisbon, followed by a hurried embarkation, and an abandonment of the Peninsula. The British divisions once withdrawn, could Portugal, when left to her own resources, maintain the contest for a month?

Under these convictions, Lord Wellington addressed to Lord Liverpool the following statement of his views, with the reasons that had led him to adopt them—and it will be found one of the clearest and ablest military documents contained in his voluminous correspondence.

“ I am certain that, if the British army should not be obliged to evacuate Portugal, the French army must withdraw from Andalusia. I think it not improbable, therefore, that a large part of it, if not the whole of the French army in Andalusia, will be introduced into the southern parts of this kingdom.

“ I do not despair of holding my ground against this accumulation of force; and I have taken measures to

prevent the only inconvenience which it can produce, viz. a deficiency of supplies. But as these troops are all within a few marches of me, and an order from Paris would not only put them in motion, but they could be in this country almost before the transports could arrive in England, I cannot think it advisable, in the existing situation of affairs, to send them out of my reach.

“ The question whether I should attack the enemy in the position which he now occupies, has been well considered by me. I have a superior army, I think, by 10,000 men, or one sixth, including the Spaniards; and, notwithstanding some defects in its composition, I think I should succeed. But the loss must necessarily be very great in killed and wounded; and the necessity which would exist of exposing the troops to the weather for some days and nights, would throw a great proportion of this convalescent army into the hospital.

“ Then, what is to be gained in this action, in which failure would be the loss of the whole cause? Nothing at present that I know of, excepting to relieve the northern provinces and Andalusia from the presence of the enemy; which relief, it is probable, that the course of events will bring about without the risk and loss of an action.

“ But there is another view of this question, which is a very serious one, and has made much impression upon my mind. If the northern provinces of Spain and Andalusia should be relieved from the pressure and presence of the enemy by the course of events, or by exertions in Portugal, what will the cause gain by this relief? In the last year, I cannot forget that I brought upon myself and General Cuesta not less than five corps d’armée, and the king’s guards and reserve, more than equal to a sixth corps; and that when the whole of Castile and the north of Spain was cleared of the enemy, not a man was put in the field by those provinces, nor even one raised!

“ In this year I have had three corps d’armée, the most numerous and efficient in Spain, upon my hands for eight

months. The kingdom of Galicia has been entirely free from the enemy, and Castile partially relieved. The Spanish army in Galicia have made no movement whatever, as General Mahy says, for want of great coats; but in fact, because they want pay, clothing, means of subsistence, transport, discipline, and every thing which can keep a body of men together in an operation. In Castile nothing has been done, excepting that the guerillas have been more daring and successful in their robberies.*

"The relief of Andalusia would, I fear, make no difference in the situation of affairs there. I do not think it quite certain that the enemy would be obliged to raise the siege of Cadiz, although it is probable that he would. But if the siege of Cadiz were not raised, the general cause would derive no advantage from the relief of Andalusia; and even if the raising the siege of Cadiz were the consequence of the relief of Andalusia, I doubt that there are means at Cadiz of putting into the field the troops now composing the garrison of that place, so as to render them a disposable force for the cause of the allies, or that any benefit would be derived from that event, excepting that it would place at the disposal of the allies the means which the enemy have collected for the siege of Cadiz, and retard, and probably prevent, the operation.

"Your Lordship will probably deem this a melancholy picture of prospects in the Peninsula, but you may rely upon its truth. This state of affairs in Spain is the result of some defects in the national character, aggravated by the

* "I am afraid that the Spaniards will bring us all to shame yet. It is scandalous, that in the third year of their war, and having been more than a year in a state of tranquillity, and having sustained no loss of importance since the battle of Ocana, they should now be depending for the safety of Cadiz, the seat of their Government, upon having one or two, more or less, British regiments. * * * * * The Cortes appear to suffer under the national disease in as great a degree as the other authorities; that is, boasting of the strength and power of the Spanish nation, till they are seriously convinced they are in no danger, and then sitting down quietly and indulging their national indolence."—*Despatch, Cartaxo, Dec. 2, 1810.*

false principles on which all the affairs of that country have been conducted since it attempted to shake off the yoke of France. The Spaniards have consequently no army; no means of raising one; no authority to discipline an army if they could raise one; no means to arm, equip, clothe, or feed any thing which could be collected under that name.

“ The war in the Peninsula, therefore, as far as the Spaniards are concerned in it, cannot take a regular shape. It must be confined to the operations of the guerillas, upon which the calculations are very different from those which would be made in respect to the operations of a more regular force.

“ If all this be true, our business is not to fight the French army, which we certainly cannot beat out of the Peninsula, but to give occupation to as large a portion of it as we can manage, and to leave the war in Spain to the guerillas. As long as the French do not interfere with our supplies, or the resources of the Portuguese government, or any point of our security, I think it very immaterial whether they are in Spain or Portugal. Indeed, adverting to the greater difficulties they have in subsisting in the latter country, and in keeping up their communications, I believe it is more advantageous that they should be where they are. Their numbers are certainly diminishing daily, while they do us no mischief; on the contrary, we are nearer to our resources than ever we were, and they leave the whole of the north of Spain open to the operations of the guerillas.

“ But if the army now in Portugal is to be assisted by other corps, operating north of the Douro and south of the Tagus, before I can have secured the supplies of provisions I require, I must then seek to dislodge them by more determined means than I have tried hitherto.

“ These means, God knows, may fail; or I may be prevented from trying them by the weather, or by other circumstances over which I can have no control. In all these cases it would be terrible not to have transports

at hand, and I cannot advise that they should be sent away.

“ It is certainly astonishing that the enemy have been able to remain in this country so long ; and it is an extraordinary instance of what a French army can do. It is positively a fact that they brought no provisions with them, and they have not received even a letter since they entered Portugal. With all our money, and having in our favour the good inclinations of the country, I assure you that I could not maintain one division in the district in which they have maintained not less than 60,000 men, and 20,000 animals, for more than two months. This time last year, I was obliged to move the British cavalry only from the district which they now occupy with their whole army, because it could not be subsisted. But they take every thing, and leave the unfortunate inhabitants to starve.

“ I have heard this day, but not from good authority, that Gardanne’s division had again crossed the Coa on the 14th, and had made a march towards Celerico on the 17th. My last letter from Silveira is of the 13th, and he does not mention the enemy being in any shape to make this movement. However, it is possible, and indeed probable, that some attempt will be made to communicate with Massena from the frontier.”*

Such were the views of Wellington—based on sound principles, and carried out with inflexible resolution. Had he followed a contrary course—had he risked and lost a battle, how fatally might that single disaster have sealed the destinies of Europe ! It would be a curious speculation to fancy the results that might have followed—England lowered to the dust ; Napoleon, master of the Peninsula, wedded to a daughter of the Cæsars, united closely to Austria—what power would have ventured to oppose him ? Russia would have submitted to his aggressions ; his armies

* Despatch, Cartaxo, 21st Dec. 1810.

would have never crossed the Vistula ; nor would the ruin have occurred, which he madly wrought himself. Success would have consolidated that dynasty now remembered but as a dream ; and he who since played king, might have lived and died a schoolmaster. Napoleon would have gone down the stream of time alone ; and a fame but yet in infancy, might have never reached its zenith. Fortune willed it otherwise—another was destined to divide immortality with “ him, the wonder of his age ; ”—and while kings and courtiers shall be forgotten, two names shall live imperishably—those of him who lost, and him who won at Waterloo !



CHAPTER XV.

RECONNAISSANCE AT RIO MAYOR—FOY RETURNS FROM PARIS—ORDERS OF NAPOLEON—SOULT'S EXPEDITION—EVENTS AT CADIZ—ASSEMBLY OF THE NATIONAL CORTEZ—ITS CONSTITUTION AND PROCEEDINGS—SOULT INVADES ESTREMADURA—DEATH OF ROMANA—SOULT SEIZES THE BRIDGE OF MERIDA—BESIEGES OLIVENCA, WHICH SURRENDERS—INVESTS BADAJOZ—MENDIZABAL SURPRISED, AND TOTALLY DEFEATED AT THE GEVORA—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL—CRITICAL POSITION OF SOULT—BADAJOZ—FAILURE OF THE EXPEDITION UNDER LORD BLAYNEY—ITS CONSEQUENCES—VICTOR DREADS AN ATTACK—GENERALS GRAHAM AND LAPENA—THEIR JOINT OPERATIONS—BATTLE OF BARROSA.

For some weeks the armies of Wellington and Massena continued quietly in each other's presence. Both generals anxiously looked forward to a battle; it was an event which both desired; but, as the positions of both were strong, the assailant must fight at disadvantage, and neither seemed inclined to throw a chance away.

The arrival at Lisbon of reinforcements, which contrary winds had long detained, induced Massena to believe that his opponent would now venture to attack. Rio Mayor, as the most vulnerable point, was the quarter from which danger might be expected; and, to satisfy himself that the allied divisions were not collecting at Alcoentre, the duke of Abrantes made a reconnaissance on the 19th of January. With his characteristic intrepidity, Junot galloped into the place before the allied pickets had cleared the street; and a German hussar, who was retiring, turned and wounded him dangerously with a carbine ball, the bullet lodging between the nose and cheekbone, and disabling the French marshal for the remainder of the campaign.

On the 2d of February, General Foy reached Massena's head-quarters, after a perilous and harrassing journey, during which he had been incessantly exposed to the attacks of the Partidas. On one occasion he lost his despatches, and half the escort; and in a night march across the mountains, three hundred of the detachment which accompanied him perished from cold and fatigue. His opportune arrival relieved Massena's uncertainty, and put him in full possession of the views and objects of the emperor. Napoleon's commands were peremptory. The position then occupied by the French armies in Portugal must be maintained—Abrantes besieged—and while the ninth corps was added to the grand army, Massena was apprized that orders had been already despatched to Soult to move through the Alentejo, and assist in a series of concerted operations. It was farther intimated that, should circumstances render it necessary, Andalusia would be abandoned, to enable the army of Portugal to hold their ground on the southern banks of the Tagus, and finally effect the great object of the emperor, by driving Lord Wellington to his ships.

Repeated orders to the above effect had been transmitted from Napoleon to the Duke of Dalmatia, but the despatches had been intercepted by the guerillas, and it was therefore late in December before Soult was acquainted with the wishes of the emperor. The marshal lost no time in carrying them into effect; and, having drafted four thousand infantry from the first corps, he marched with the cavalry of Latour Maubourg to Seville. To secure that city in his absence, he entrusted the command to General Darciau, and entrenched it on the side of Niebla; and having posted Godinot at Cordova, Digeon at Ecija, and Remond at Gibraleon, Soult immediately put his *corps d'armée* in motion. His force amounted to 20,000 men, of whom 4,000 were cavalry, with fifty pieces of field artillery, a siege and pontoon train, and an enormous number of country carts, for the transport of ammunition and stores.

Victor, in the mean time, was entrusted with the blockade of Cadiz and the protection of the French lines.*

After this important city had been saved in the first instance, by the rapid movements of Albuquerque, and afterwards secured by the introduction of a British force under the command of Sir Thomas Graham, but two events of military importance had occurred,—the defence of Fort Matagorda, and the singular deliverance of a number of French prisoners, confined in prison-ships within the harbour. The fort, notwithstanding its inefficiency as a place of strength, held out for fifty-five days, until the flotilla and a line-of-battle ship, which flanked it, were driven off by heated shot, and its own weak defences were utterly destroyed, by the concentrated fire of the French batteries erected on the Trocadero. Then, after enduring for thirty hours a crushing cannonade from fifty guns, the remnant of the garrison were removed, bearing with them those colours which, within one brief hour, had been six times shot away, and as often re-hoisted amid the cheers of that gallant band who so gloriously defended them.

The escape of the French captives was accomplished during a heavy gale of wind; when, desperately trusting to the fury of the elements, they succeeded in liberating themselves from a cruel and iniquitous imprisonment, to which, in defiance of terms guaranteed by an honourable surrender, they had been most shamefully exposed. Many perished in the surf, and more were killed by the fire of the Spanish batteries and English ships; but this was a merciful deliverance, compared with starvation upon a desert island, a fate

* "They fortified Puerto Real, Puerto Santa Maria, and Chiclana; formed entrenched camps between these places, and strengthened the Trocadero, where they established batteries from whence to bombard the town. Having presently found the inefficiency of the field artillery, which was all that they had brought with them, they fished up the guns from the French and Spanish ships which had been wrecked upon that coast after the battle of Trafalgar. Most of the heavy pieces with which two-and-twenty batteries were now mounted, were recovered in this manner from the sea."—*Southey*.

to which their unfortunate companions were subsequently consigned.*

It was not, however, the progress of its siege which rendered Cadiz at this period a point of engrossing interest. There, the great popular movement which afterwards influenced the political fortunes of the peninsula so much, was consummated; and, "after two years of intrigues and delay, the National Cortes was assembled, and the long-suppressed voice of the people was at last to be heard."

To the worst form of a bad monarchy, as bad an executive had succeeded; and now that government yielded to one, in all its essential qualities, purely democratic. "The enemy surrounded the bay of Cadiz, and were masters of

* "Five thousand at first, and afterwards half as many more, were landed upon Cabrera, a rocky island, about fifteen miles in circumference, with no other inhabitants than a handful of soldiers, who were stationed there to prevent the Barbary corsairs from making it a place of rendezvous. A few tents were provided for the superior officers; the remainder were left to shelter themselves as they could. There was but one spring on the island, and in summer this was dry: they discovered some old wells, which had been filled up, and which, when cleared, yielded bad water, and very little of it. The supplies from Palma were sent so irregularly, sometimes owing to the weather, but far more frequently to inhuman negligence, that scores and hundreds of these miserable creatures died of hunger and thirst; many were in a state of complete nakedness, when, in mere humanity, clothing was sent them by the British commander in the Mediterranean: and at other times they were kept alive by barrels of biscuit and of meat which the English ships threw overboard for them to be cast on shore. But in the third year of their abode, the captain of a Spanish frigate, whose name ought to have been recorded, remonstrated so effectually upon the manner of their treatment, that from that time they were regularly supplied with food. He gave them potatoes and cabbage and tobacco-seed, from which they raised sufficient for their consumption; and having, by persevering labour, without any other tools than a single knife, broken six feet into a rock, on the surface of which there was appearance enough of moisture to excite their hopes, they obtained a supply of water. Some of them used the skulls of their own dead, for want of other vessels, to contain it; and others, with no such excuse of necessity, manufactured buttons from their bones! About 1500 entered the Spanish service rather than endure a banishment to which no end could be foreseen; and some 500, chiefly officers, were in compassion removed to England. At the end of the war not more than 2000 remained in Cabrera, nearly half of those who had been landed there having sunk under their sufferings."—*Southey*.

the adjacent country, wherever they could cover it with their troops, or scour it with their cavalry. Yet in the sight of these enemies, from the neck of land which they thus beleaguered, the Cortes legislated for Spain; and its proceedings, though the Intruder and his unhappy adherents affected to despise them, were regarded with the deepest anxiety throughout the peninsula, and wherever the Spanish language extends. There is no other example in history of so singular a position." *

The restoration of the Cortes was not only popular in itself, but, from the extensive principle of representation that formed its basis, it promised paramount advantages. With proper qualifications, no class of well deserving Spaniards were excluded. All persons of twenty-five years of age, whose incomes were not derived from place or pension under the government, who were not debtors to the state, and who were of sound body and good moral report, were eligible to a seat in this famous assembly. All cities which had sent members to the last Cortes were now to elect the same number. Every provincial junta returned one deputy, and the provinces were represented, in the proportion of one member to every 50,000 inhabitants. Twenty-six members, chosen from natives of Spanish America resident in the mother country, represented the colonies.

As of necessity, in some of the provinces of Old Spain, now strongly occupied by the French, the elections could not have free course; and as the representatives sent from others were many of them taken by the enemy on their way to Cadiz, sixty-eight supplementary deputies were chosen in Cadiz, and in other districts, with which the communications were yet secure; and from this list all vacancies were filled. It had been the intention of the supreme junta to have instituted a higher chamber of the grandees and dignitaries of the church, as a wholesome check upon the Cortes, but this design was abandoned; however, nobles

* Southey.

and secular priests were admitted as candidates for the great national assembly.*

The Cortes assembled late in September; and to judge by the boldness with which a general and unrestricted liberty was insisted upon in their debates, a national regeneration might have been expected. But it proved only a hollow advocacy of principles, which to Spaniards seemed imperfectly understood; and it soon became apparent, that the same violence and incapacity that had rendered the proceedings of former juntas so mischievous, marked the general conduct of the Cortes and influenced all their acts. "In the administration of the armies, in the conduct of the war, in the execution of the laws, and the treatment of the colonies, there was as much of vanity, of intrigue, of procrastination, negligence, folly, and violence as before." †

Far from giving vigour to the executive, they embarrassed it by idle interruptions; and the regency appointed by themselves, was thus rendered as useless in every respect as the juntas it had succeeded. Time was consumed in pompous declamation, and sittings wasted in metaphysical inquiry. While shells from the French batteries were falling in the streets,‡ the Cortes occupied itself, not in devising measures for driving the enemy from their gates, but in maintaining what they styled "the sovereignty of the people," and declaring, in inflated speeches, all that Spaniards would endure and effect.

Whoever might have been misled by these proceedings, Lord Wellington was not. He treated this "war of words" with the sceptical contempt it merited. In transmitting to his brother a quantity of arms and accoutrements for the

* Sherer.

† Despatch, dated Cartaxo, 13th January, 1811.

‡ "At the Trocadero point there were immense batteries, and some notable pieces of ordnance called cannon-mortars, or Villantroys, after the inventor. These huge engines were cast at Seville, and, being placed in slings, threw shells with such prodigious force as to range over Cadiz, a distance of more than five thousand yards. But to obtain this flight, the shells were partly filled with lead, and their charge of powder was too small for an effective explosion."—*Napier*.

use of the garrison, he concludes his letter with the significant remark,—“We shall now see whether *boasting* will relieve the siege of Cadiz.”

The promptitude with which the duke of Dalmatia proceeded to effect the orders of the emperor, embarrassed the Spanish generals, who, with their customary military ignorance, were unable to penetrate the real objects of the expedition, and supposed that the French marshal was about to march by Truxillo on Almaraz. Lord Wellington, however, in sufficient time undeceived Mendizabal, whom he had previously exhorted to concentrate his troops, dismantle Olivença, and secure the passage of the Guadiana by the destruction of the bridges. When Mortier reached Zafra the Spanish general fell back; but neglecting the advice he had received, the French obtained possession of Merida; while Ballasteros was forced from Frejenal by the division of Gazan; and thus, in the very commencement of the campaign, Estremadura was left nearly unprotected.*

The system of defence which the Spanish commanders should adopt, had been clearly detailed both to Romana

* In writing to his brother, Lord Wellington thus forcibly expresses the occurrence:—

“The conduct of the Spaniards in Estremadura surpasses every thing they have yet done. They were particularly desired to defend the Guadiana, and to destroy the bridges of Medellin and Merida; which orders they had received, and the engineer went to Merida to execute this work. Instead of executing it, he makes a report, stating objections to the measure, every word of which proves that it ought to be executed; and he refers for orders.

“Mendizabal, who is at Badajoz, does the same; and in the mean time the French, who were supposed by Mendizabal not to have advanced further than Zafra, drive the Spanish cavalry from Merida, and obtain possession of the bridge!

“Be it remembered that 400 French infantry, in the year 1808, held this same post and bridge of Merida against the whole of Cuesta’s army for one month, in the summer, when the Guadiana was fordable!

“I really believe that if they would have defended Merida and Medellin for a few days only, so as to impede for that period the passage of Mortier’s corps across the Guadiana, the French must have retired from this country: and I think that Claparède’s division has been ordered to Guarda, to protect the movement by the valley of the Mondego.”

and Mendizabal; and the former had already detached two divisions from his own army, to strengthen the Spanish corps on the Guadiana. The marquess intended to have repaired in person to the frontier; but he died suddenly on the 23d of January, at Cartaxo. No man was ever more deeply or deservedly regretted. He was a gallant and enterprising soldier—a pure and consistent patriot. He possessed the confidence of his own troops, and commanded the respect of the enemy.* But by none was his death more heavily felt, than by him who was best able to estimate his virtues; and in communicating the event to Mr. Henry Wellesley, Lord Wellington predicted the fatal influence the loss of him, who with justice might have been termed the “only general,”† would have upon the cause of Spain.

On the 6th the advanced cavalry carried the bridge at Merida; and Soult, having secured the passage of his artillery and stores, and driven the Partidas from the banks of the Tagus, marched against the town of Olivença, into which place Mendizabal, in opposition to the remonstrances of Lord Wellington, had thrown four thousand of his best soldiers.

Olivença was of no importance in itself; was weakly armed, had a breach but imperfectly repaired, and was neither worthy nor capable of being defended. After having thus madly compromised his best division, Mendizabal, when separated from Ballasteros, found himself unable to succour them; and, in his difficulty, applied to Romana for assistance, who despatched a brigade from Abrantes, on the 18th, under Don Carlos d’España, and a

* In an accidental interview between some English and French officers, the latter “spoke in the highest terms of Romana, who had lately died, calling him ‘Le seul général Espagnol digne de son grade.’ They asked also after Lord Wellington; saying he had done wonders with the Portuguese, and praising him greatly for his conduct of the campaign.”

† “His loss is irreparable: under existing circumstances, I know not how he can be replaced; and we may expect that it will be followed by the fall of Badajoz.”—*Despatch, Cartaxo, 23d January, 1811.*

division from Cartaxo, under Virues, on the 20th, with directions to these commanders to relieve the place.

Although Soult had completed the investment on the 11th, the weather was so severe that the covered way was not crowned until the 19th, and on the 20th, his batteries commenced breaching. Manuel Herk, the Spanish governor, was duly apprized that Romana had sent two divisions to his assistance, and he assured Mendizabal that he had ample means to warrant him in holding out, and, consequently, that he would defend the fortress to the last; but, on the following morning, the first salvo from the French battery was the signal for an unconditional surrender. By this misfortune a large supply of provisions fell into the hands of the enemy—and Soult obtained twenty pieces of artillery, and four thousand effective men.

The fall of Olivença was but a portion of the success that attended the operations of the French marshal. Ballasteros was overtaken and brought to action by Gazan's division, on the 28th, at Castallejoz, and defeated with the loss of one thousand men. The beaten army crossed the Guadiana in great confusion; and thus, in the brief space of three weeks, a fortress had been reduced, and two corps defeated and dispersed, after sustaining the loss of twelve thousand of their best soldiers.

On the 26th, Soult proceeded to invest Badajoz. Mendizabal was already in the fortress; and with a strong position under the walls, and ten thousand men exclusive of the garrison, with common discretion, he might have been considered in perfect security. He was protected by three fortresses; while the Guadiana and the Gevora covering his front, his right rested on fort St. Christoval; Elvas was in the rear of his centre, Campo Mayor behind his left; and Lord Wellington, in an able and lucid memorandum, had amply detailed the means by which he could, and with perfect safety to himself, prevent the French marshal from investing Badajoz at all.

Although, by his own neglect, Mendizabal had lost his

communications with the fortresses in his rear, the sudden flooding of the Rivallas swept the French bridges down the stream, and, from the scarcity of food and forage which this accident produced, obliged Soult's cavalry to abandon the right bank of the Guadiana, and thus open Elvas and Campo Mayor to the Spanish general again. Thus he was enabled to unite his own corps with those of Carrera and D'España; and all he had now to do was merely to entrench his position. But this prudent, but defensive system, was rejected; and, by repeated sallies, Mendizabal attempted to force the enemy to raise the siege. But even in the execution of these simple operations, the incapacity of the Spanish leaders was evidenced. On the morning of the 7th, five thousand of the garrison rushed upon the trenches, and by a gallant effort carried the batteries, and obtained possession of the cannon. The work of a few minutes would have rendered the guns unserviceable, had not the means to spike them been forgotten; and the French reserves being promptly brought forward by Mortier, the Spaniards were driven into the city in desperate confusion, after sustaining a loss of nearly seven hundred men.

Mendizabal, leaving the fortress in charge of the governor, Rafael Menacho, formed an encampment round Fort St. Christoval; but, being inconvenienced by the fire of the French mortars, he fell back behind the Gevora, merely contenting himself with destroying the bridge. Perceiving, from a false security, that his opponent had neglected to entrench himself, the French marshal determined to surprise the Spanish camp; and accordingly, he made prompt and able dispositions to effect it.

On the evening of the 18th, the floods had sufficiently abated to permit his infantry and artillery to ford the Guadiana, four miles above its confluence with the Gevora, while a strong cavalry division was moved down from Montijo. At daybreak of the 19th, he succeeded, with equal ease, in crossing the Gevora, by fords on either side of the bridge which Mendizabal had destroyed. A thick mist

concealed his operations effectually; and 5000 infantry, and 2000 cavalry, were passed over a river in front of 15,000 Spaniards, and not a shot disturbed them. At eight o'clock the fog cleared away; "and the first beams of the sun, and the certainty of victory, flashed together on the French soldiers; for the horsemen were already surrounding the Spanish left; and in the centre, infantry, cavalry, and guns, heaped together, were waiving to and fro in disorder; while the right, having fallen away from San Christoval, was totally unsupported."* The result may be readily conceived: by ten o'clock the Spanish army was almost annihilated; eight thousand prisoners,—the entire of the artillery, colours, baggage, and ammunition, were taken,—while with difficulty two thousand of the routed troops reached Campo Mayor, and as many more found shelter in Badajoz and Elvas. Virues was made prisoner, and Mendizabal and Carrera saved themselves by an early and ignominious flight.

The signal defeat the army of Mendizabal had suffered, was a source of the deepest mortification to Lord Wellington. In writing to Lord Liverpool, he shows how seriously his own prospects were affected by the disaster. After stating how little progress Soult had hitherto made in the operations of the siege of Badajoz, he thus continues:—

"The enemy have not been able to establish themselves within the redoubt of Pardaleras since they carried it on the 11th instant, and have made no progress in the operations of the siege. Their position, however, on the right of the Guadiana, gives them great advantages, of which they well know how to avail themselves; and they actually commenced to entrench it on the evening of the day on which they obtained possession of it.

"Although experience has taught me to place no reliance upon the effect of the exertions of the Spanish troops, notwithstanding the frequent instances of their bravery; I acknowledge that this recent disaster has disappointed and

* Napier.

grieved me much. The loss of this army, and its probable consequence, the fall of Badajoz, have materially altered the situation of the allies in this part of the Peninsula; and it will not be an easy task to place them in the situation in which they were, much less in that in which they would have been, if this misfortune had not occurred.

“ I am concerned to add to this melancholy history, that the Portuguese brigade of cavalry did not behave much better than the other troops. Brigadier-General Maddon did every thing in his power to induce them to charge, but in vain; and Lieutenant-Colonel Brown was wounded, but not dangerously. This circumstance shows the effect of surprise and of general panic upon troops, as this brigade have, upon former occasions, behaved remarkably well.

“ I am informed that there are nine thousand good troops in Badajoz, some having retired into that fortress from the field of battle, and that the garrison is well supplied with provisions which have been left there by the inhabitants, who quitted the place when the communication with it was recently opened.

“ The works are still untouched; and the enemy's fire has hitherto done but little damage to the town.”

Notwithstanding that the victory on the Gevora had placed the Spanish army *hors de combat*, still the eventual success of the Duke of Dalmatia was dependent on many and very doubtful contingencies. His operations had involved a loss, which his limited numbers were ill-adapted to sustain. The weather continued wet and stormy; and, consequently, his convoys were brought forward with great labour, and his foragers were necessarily spread over an extent of country, which weakened a corps already reduced by two thousand casualties, and exhausted the spirits and the strength of the soldiery. Lord Wellington was not likely to permit a fortress, to which he attached so much importance, to fall without making a vigorous effort for its relief. The floods which had forced the French marshal to raise the investment, enabled the inhabitants to quit the

city, and leave ample supplies behind them for the subsistence of the garrison. The place was strong—the governor determined to maintain it—and the victory which had destroyed the Spanish army on the heights of San Christoval, increased the defenders of Badajoz to nine thousand effective men. Under such circumstances, Soult boldly sate down before a place, whose subsequent sieges obtained for it a sanguinary and glorious celebrity.*

“Badajoz is situated on the left bank of the Guadiana; which river is from three to five hundred yards broad, and washes one-fourth of the enceinte, rendering it nearly inattacking. The defences along the river are confined to a simple and badly flanked rampart, with an exposed revêtement, but on the other sides consist of eight spacious and well-built regular fronts, having a good counter-scarp, covered-way, and glacis, but the ravelins incomplete. The scarp of the bastions exceeds thirty feet in height, and that of the curtains varies from twenty-three to twenty-six feet. In advance of these fronts are two detached works: one called the Bardaleras, at two hundred yards distance, is a crown-work; its escarps are low, its ditches narrow, and its rear badly closed: the other, called the Picurina, is a strong redoubt, four hundred yards in advance of the town. On the

* “The town of Badajoz contains a population of about 16,000, and, within the space of thirteen months, experienced the miseries attendant upon a state of siege three several times. The first was undertaken by Lord Beresford, towards the end of April 1811, who was obliged to abandon operations by Soult advancing to its relief, and which led to the battle of Albuera, on the 16th of May.

“The second siege was by Lord Wellington in person, who, after the battle of Fuentes d’Onoro, directed his steps towards the south with a portion of the allied army. Operations commenced on the 30th of May, and continued till the 10th of June, when the siege was again abandoned; Soult having a second time advanced, in combined operation with the army of Marmont from the north. The allies continued the blockade of the town till the 17th, when they recrossed the Guadiana, and took up a position on the Caya.

“The third siege, again undertaken by Lord Wellington in person, was begun on the 17th of March, 1812, and continued without interruption till the 6th of April, when it fell by assault, after a most determined and gallant resistance on the part of the French.”—*Mackie*.

north-east of the town, at the angle formed by the junction of the river Rivillas with the Guadiana, rises a hill, to the height of more than one hundred feet, the summit of which is crowned by an old castle; and its walls, naked, weak, and but partially flanked, here form part of the enceinte of the place.

“The space contained within the castle is considerable, and various projects have, at different times, been under consideration for occupying it with a citadel, or some interior defensive post; but nothing had ever been carried into effect. Indeed the defences of the castle had been unaccountably neglected; two or three field-pieces only being mounted on its walls, and those without the shelter of proper parapets.

“Immediately opposite to the castle, on the other bank of the Guadiana, at the distance of five hundred yards, are situated the heights of Christoval, rising to nearly the elevation of the castle; and as the terreplein, or interior space of the castle, is an inclined plane towards the Guadiana, every part of it is seen from the Christoval heights. To prevent a besieger readily availing himself of this advantage, in any attack of the town, a fort has been constructed on them: its figure is nearly that of a square of three hundred feet; the scarp, which is well-built of stone, is twenty feet in height, and mostly well covered by a revêted counter-scarp.

“The communication between the town and Fort Christoval is very open to interruption; being either by a bridge, six hundred yards in length, subject to be enfiladed, or by boats for which there is no security.”*

While Soult's expedition into Estremadura was thus far attended by the most brilliant success, the French influence in Andalusia had been seriously endangered in his absence. It was strange with what indifference the population in the south of Spain had witnessed the progress of the war; and their unaccountable apathy formed a striking

* Jones's Journal of the Sieges.

contrast to the fierce and active opposition offered to the invading armies in every province besides. An attempt had been recently made to excite a spirit, which events hitherto had failed to rouse. A mixed force, under the command of Lord Blayney,* had landed on the coast—made a feeble effort to seize the castle of Fuengirola—were repulsed by a sortie—surprised afterwards by an advanced guard of Sebastiani, and driven to their shipping, with the loss of their general who was taken prisoner, with nearly two hundred officers and men. This signal failure was calculated to confirm the influence already acquired by the French; and an expedition, which, if successful, might have elicited a popular movement, produced the very opposite effect; and although in itself “well-contrived, and adequate to its object, was ruined by misconduct, and terminated in disaster and disgrace.”

An occurrence like this would have gone far to extinguish any spirit of resistance that might have been awakened by better fortunes; and, probably, it confirmed Soult in the hazardous experiment of withdrawing half the force from the blockade of Cadiz, to carry on his operations in Estremadura. Indeed, one circumstance would prove sufficiently how little danger he apprehended from a popular outbreak; for, before he marched from Seville, he organized a native force of Spanish escopeteros,† to maintain the tranquillity of Andalusia.

It was not to be expected that a force numerically superior to that which held them in duress, would continue long inactive; and Victor, with an investing line of twenty-five miles in length, and hardly twenty thousand men to

* Lord Blayney was a man of great personal courage, but utterly ignorant of the common principles of war. Although aware that a very superior force was in his immediate neighbourhood, he wasted two days in idly cannonading a fort with light guns, on which the main-deck battery of a frigate, and the heavier ordnance of the gun-boats had been tried in vain. To the last, he persisted in mistaking the advancing enemy for Spanish cavalry; and he was actually a prisoner before he could be convinced of his error.

† Fusileers.

hold it, distributed his reduced force with excellent judgment, and made every preparation to repel the attempts, which, in Soult's absence, would probably be made by the Anglo-Spanish army, to force his position and raise the siege of Cadiz.

The allied troops who formed the garrison of the city were commanded by their respective officers; the British by Lieutenant-General Graham,* the Spaniards by Don Manuel de Lapena. When a plan of operations was finally arranged, the English general waived his right to command, and consented to act under the orders of a man, who, subsequently, proved himself totally unworthy of the honour which a brave and able officer had thus conceded.

The plan adopted by the Anglo-Spanish generals, was to embark their united forces, sail from Cadiz for Tarifa, land and counter-march for sixty miles, carry the intermediate posts at Vejer and Casa Vieja, and, assisted by a corps under General Zayas, fall, as they hoped, by surprise, on Victor's camp at Chiclana, and drive him from his lines. While Zayas, for the passage of his division, should throw a bridge over the Santi Petri, near the sea, the Partidas were to menace Sebastiani; and Ballasteros, with the remnant of his corps, threaten Seville; and thus occupy the attention of the enemy, and prevent any union between Victor and the French detachments in the higher provinces and Grenada.

* At this period, Lord Lynedoch had passed his sixtieth year. His earlier life was spent in the enjoyment of domestic felicity, and the pursuits of a private gentleman. His lady, to whom he was ardently attached, died on her journey to the south of France, and to relieve his sorrow at her loss, Mr. Graham hastened to Toulon, in 1793, and joined Lord Hood as a volunteer. Here he displayed his military abilities so decidedly, as to obtain for him, on his return home, a permission from the government to raise a regiment, although it was strongly opposed by the Commander-in-chief. He served at the siege of Mantua in 1796, afterwards at Malta, and, lastly, under Sir John Moore. That General, during his disastrous retreat, conceived a high opinion of the talents of General Graham; and it was principally to the warm recommendation of that lamented officer, that he was now indebted for the command at Cadiz.

The embarkation could not be effected within sight of the enemy's works, without convincing the French marshal that an attempt to raise the siege was contemplated,—but where or how it would be made, it was impossible to foresee,—and he therefore determined to remain on the alert, until the movements of the allies should disclose the true object of their operations. Leaving a sufficient garrison in his principal works, Victor collected the flower of his army near Chiclana; and with eleven thousand chosen troops in hand, he took a convenient position between the great roads of Corril and Medina.

A gale of wind prevented the allies from landing at Tarifa, and drove them to Algesiras, where they disembarked. Lapena here assumed the command, and commenced a long and most fatiguing march, with a force, of all arms, amounting to 14,000 men, of whom about 4200 were British troops. After moving at first towards Medina Sidonia, and thus imposing on his army a wearying and unnecessary detour, he changed his line of march; and at noon of the 5th, reached the Cerro de Puerco, a low undulating ridge, better known in Peninsular history, as the Heights of Barrosa.

The position on which the allies rested is a rising ground which overlooks a rough and heathy plain, and stands about four miles south from the debouchement of the river Santi Petri. It is bounded on the right by the forest of Chiclana, on the left by the Atlantic, and on the centre by a thick wood, beyond which is the Torre de Bermeja.

On reaching Barrosa, Lapena found that Zayas had been attacked by Victor; and though he still held the bridge he had thrown over the Santi Petri, his communications with the Isla de Leon were seriously endangered. The Spanish general, in consequence, pushed forward his vanguard, under Lardizable,—and, after a sharp affair, the latter effected a junction with Zayas; and thus the whole of the allied force was safely posted on the left flank of Victor's lines.

But Lapena could not estimate his advantage. His sole anxiety appeared to turn upon holding his communication safe with Cadiz; and while his rear, entirely separated from "the centre, was still straggling over the country;* and contrary to the expressed wishes of Graham, who implored him to hold Barrosa, he declined his advice, and ordered the British to march through the pine wood on Bermeja. Graham, supposing that Anglona's division and the cavalry would continue to occupy the hill, leaving the flank companies of the 9th and 82d to protect his baggage, obeyed the order, and commenced his march. But the astonishment of the English general was unbounded, when, on entering the wood, he saw Lapena moving his entire corps from the heights of Barrosa, with the exception of three or four battalions and as many pieces of artillery.

"Unfortunately, the English general was not the only person who had observed that Barrosa was abandoned. Victor, concealed in the forest of Chiclana, anxiously watched the movements of the allies. He saw the fatal error committed by the Spanish leader—and instantly made dispositions to profit from the ignorance and obstinacy of his antagonist."†

Keeping three grenadier battalions in reserve, Victor sent orders to Latour Maubourg's cavalry to move rapidly on Vejer, while with the whole of his disposable force he rushed forward to seize the height which his opponent had so unwisely abandoned. Ruffin commanded the left, Laval the centre, and Villatte the reserve. Pivoting upon the latter, Laval's division moved to meet the British—while Ruffin, ascending the reverse of the hill, interposed

* "The irregularity and tardiness of the Spanish movements, gave a portentous warning of what might be expected from them in the field. They occupied fifteen hours in executing a moderate march, passing over the ground in a rambling and disorderly manner, that seemed rather like peasants wandering from a fair, than troops moving in the presence of an enemy."—*Victories of the British Armies.*

† *Victories of the British Armies.*

*Rally of the French when
their columns united*

To Chuctana

To Nahua, Sibenta

Lagoon

CAVALRY
CHARGE

GRENADIERS

LAVAL

Wheatley

Ruffin

Brown

Dikes

GRENADIERS

GERMAN MUSSARS

FRENCH
CAVALRY

SPENCARDS

HAGGAGE

TORRE HARROSA

b a c b

Village

Cartizaboli

La Pena

Bermeja

Whittingham

Zavas

T H E I S L A N D

Island of Santa Paula

BARRIOSA

RATTLE
or

MARCH, 1888





between the Spaniards and Medina, dispersed the camp-followers in an instant, and captured the guns and baggage.

A crowd of fugitives apprized the English general that the heights were already won—the enemy in his rear—the French cavalry between him and the sea—and Laval's brigade moving in rapid march to fall on his left flank.

“ It was indeed a most perilous situation—and in that extremity, the brave old man to whom the British had been fortunately confided, proved himself worthy of the trust. He saw the ruin of retreat,—safety lay in daring—and though the enemy held the key of the position with fresh troops, Graham boldly determined to attack them with his wearied ones.

“ Wheeling right about, with their rear ranks in front, the British regiments issued from the wood, and pressing boldly up the hill, the battle was instantly commenced. Duncan's artillery opened a furious cannonade on the column of Laval; and Colonel Barnard, with the rifles and Portuguese caçadores, extended to the left and began firing. The rest of the British troops formed two masses, without regard to regiments or brigades; one, under General Dilkes, marched direct against Ruffin,—and the other, under Colonel Whately, boldly attacked Laval. On both sides the guns poured a torrent of grape and canister over the field; the infantry kept up a withering fire; and both sides advanced, for both seemed anxious to bring the contest to an issue. Whately, when the lines approached, came forward to the charge, drove the first line upon the second, and routed both with slaughter.”*

Dilkes's attack upon Ruffin's brigade had been equally bold, and obtained a similar success. Although the French held the crest of the hill, breathless, disorganized, but with a desperate resolution that seemed to hold ordinary disadvantages at defiance, Colonel Brown pressed up the ridge. “ Half of his detachment went down under the enemy's

* Victories of the British Armies.

first fire ; yet he maintained the fight, until Dilkes's column, which had crossed a deep hollow, and never stopped even to re-form the regiments, came up, with little order indeed, but in a fierce mood, when the whole ran up towards the summit ; there was no slackness on any side, and at the very edge of the ascent, their gallant opponents met them. A dreadful, and for some time a doubtful, fight ensued ; but Ruffin and Chaudron Rousseau, commanding the chosen grenadiers, both fell, mortally wounded. The English bore strongly onward ; and their incessant slaughtering fire forced the French from the hill, with the loss of three guns and many brave soldiers."

Still the routed brigades, though heavily repulsed, exhibited an undaunted spirit worthy of their former fame, and made a brave but bootless effort to renew the fight, and restore the fortune of the day. Retiring by concentric lines, they attempted to rally at the point where their disordered masses united, and arrest the farther advance of the British regiments. The English artillery, however, rendered every exertion to recover their formation unavailing ; the fire of the guns was rapid, close, and murderous, —the shattered brigades yielded to its violence—and the handful of cavalry charged furiously, and completed the victory.

" Nothing could exceed the dastardly duplicity with which the Spanish general abandoned his gallant ally. Lapena never made a movement towards the succour of the British ; and although the French cavalry scarcely exceeded two hundred men, and the Spanish, under Whittingham, amounted to more than eight, the latter never drew a sabre. Never was there a finer field for cavalry to act on with effect ; Ruffin's left was perfectly open ; and even a demonstration of attack must have turned defeat to ruin. Three troops of German hussars, under Ponsonby, reached the field at the close of the battle, just as the beaten divisions were attempting to unite. They charged through the French squadrons, overthrew them, captured

two guns, and sabred many of Ruffin's grenadiers, while endeavouring to regain their ranks."*

"To paint the character of Barrosa in a few words, Napier's might well describe it. 'The contemptible feebleness of Lapena furnished a surprising contrast to the heroic vigour of Graham, whose attack was an inspiration rather than a resolution—so wise, so sudden was the decision, so swift, so conclusive was the execution.'"

* Victories of the British Armies.



CHAPTER XVI.

LAPENA'S TREACHERY — LOSSES SUSTAINED IN THE ACTION — THE ALLIES RETIRE TO THE ISLA — THE CRISIS OF THE BATTLE — GRAHAM'S PERSONAL INTREPIDITY — LORD WELLINGTON'S LETTER — EFFECT PRODUCED IN ENGLAND BY LAPENA'S MISCONDUCT — THANKS VOTED TO THE ARMY — SPEECHES OF MR. WARD AND MR. WHITBREAD — FALL OF BADAJOZ — JOSE DE IMAZ — HIS TREACHERY ESCAPES PUNISHMENT — SOULT'S CAMPAIGN TERMINATES.

SUCH was the contest at Barrosa—the shortest of the Peninsular conflicts, and, with the exception of Albuera, the bloodiest far. The victors and the vanquished suffered heavily; the French loss, however, being nearly double that sustained by the British. Had Lapena, retaining his infantry, despatched his cavalry and horse artillery to the assistance of his ally, Victor's defeat would have been ruinous; and consequently, the blockade of Cadiz must have been raised. The Spaniard had no plea to extenuate his treachery. With twelve thousand fresh soldiers what had he to dread? And yet, after the unequalled gallantry of the brave man he had abandoned secured a glorious triumph, he looked idly on while the wreck of the beaten brigades were hurrying in dreadful disorder from the heights in the direction of Chiclana. That his troops, if properly commanded, would not have been wanting in their duty, may be fairly inferred from the circumstance of the Walloon Guards and regiment of Ciudad Real, without orders, counter-marching when they heard the firing, and hastening to the scene of action.



H. Burdige

The exhausted state of the British troops had made any attempt at a pursuit impossible; and a position was taken "on the eastern side of the hill" by the conquerors, while the Spanish regiments, although too late to share in the arduous struggle which was already ended, secured the right of the English line.

Two thousand of Victor's corps were put *hors de combat* in the action; and an eagle, with six pieces of artillery, and four hundred and thirty-eight prisoners, remained in possession of the British.* Never were the trophies of a victory more dearly won. More than one-fourth of the whole force of Graham were either killed or wounded; for without losing a prisoner, the English casualties, in killed and wounded, amounted to one thousand two hundred and forty-two.†

As he had left his allies during the conflict without

* "Return of the Ordnance taken in the action of Barrosa, on the 5th of March, 1811:—Two 7-inch howitzers, three heavy 8-pounders, one 4-pounder, with their ammunition waggons, and a proportion of horses."

† "Return of Prisoners taken in the action of Barrosa, on the 5th of March, 1811:—Two General Officers, 1 Field Officer, 9 Captains, 8 Subalterns, 420 rank and file."

† "Return of the killed, wounded, and missing, of the troops under the command of Lieut.-General Graham, in the action of Barrosa, with the French Corps d'Armée, commanded by Marshal Victor, on the 5th of March, 1811:—

	Officers.	Non-comd. Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	7	6	189	24	202
Wounded . . .	55	45	940	42	1040
Missing	—	—	—	—	—
Total	62	51	1129	66	1242

"N.B. The General of Brigade Rousseau, and 2 Captains, since dead of their wounds."—*Wellington Despatches.*

support, in perfect keeping with his character, Lapena allowed them to remain upon the battle-field without either sending food to maintain the living, or assistance to inter the dead, while he continued in his position an idle looker-on. Disgusted with the heartless neglect of a man "in whom all military feeling seemed extinct," Graham declined any farther communion with his unworthy confederate; and when he had collected his wounded men,* returned to the Isla, by the bridge of Zayas, with the remnant of his gallant division. "Lapena speedily followed his example,—the bridge of Santi Petri was again broken down. Victor cautiously resumed his position round the bay, where he was soon after joined by Soult, returning from his victorious expedition into Estremadura; and the battle of Barrosa remained without result, save that imperishable one, which arises from the confidence which it communicated to the British arms, and the glory which it gave to the British name."†

Never was a general placed in a situation, where the indecision of a moment would have wrought such ruin. "Had Graham or his troops given way, or even hesitated,

* "After the engagement, the wounded, from want of means of transport, were left upon the field of action the whole night and part of the following day. Chadron Rousseau was of the number. His dog, a white poodle, which had been left in quarters upon the advance of the French, on finding that the general did not return with those who escaped from the battle, set out in search of him,—found him at night in his dreary resting-place,—lay down at his side, and expressed his affliction by moans, and by licking the feet and hands of his dying master. When the crisis took place some hours after, he seemed aware of the fatal change, attached himself closely to the body, and for three days refused the sustenance which was offered him.

"Arrangements having been made for the interment of the dead, the body of the general was committed to its honourable grave. The dog lay down upon the earth which covered the beloved remains, and evinced the liveliest sorrow. General Graham, whose fine feelings had prompted him to superintend the last duties due to the gallant slain, observed the friendless mourner, drew him no longer resisting from the spot, brought him from the Peninsula, and gave him a comfortable asylum at his residence in Perthshire, where the faithful animal continued, till he died, an honoured guest."—*Abridged from a Periodical.*

† Alison's History of Europe.

the whole army must have been driven like sheep into an enclosure; the Almanza creek on one side, the sea on the other,—the San Petri to bar their flight, and the enemy hanging on their rear in all the fierceness of victory.”* In the heat of battle, when “the issue hung upon a thread,” his horse was shot, and for a few moments the English general lay upon the ground, unable to disengage himself from beneath the dying animal. Even then the coolness of the brave old man evinced itself. He called on the 87th to charge—a thrilling cheer answered the order—on went that glorious regiment with levelled bayonets, and the opposing ranks of the French grenadiers melted away before the coming rush, which even their oft-tried intrepidity had not the firmness to await.

A more singular display of personal courage was afterwards required from the English general. It would scarcely be credited, that Lapena published a detail of the battle, claimed the victory as his own, and ascribed the ulterior failure of his plans to Graham’s misconduct, in withdrawing the British division to the Isla. Two of his general officers, Lascy and Cruz-Murgeon, supported this outrageous falsehood, and even had fabricated plans of the action engraven, in order to mislead the Cortes. A plain and manly statement from the indignant general to Mr. Henry Wellesley demolished this impudent manifesto; and Lascy having used some intemperate language, which Graham considered as a personal offence, the latter challenged the mendacious Spaniard, and “enforced an apology with his sword.”†

From one “whose praise was honour,” Graham obtained the high commendation which his gallantry and military talents so well deserved. Lord Wellington’s reply to the official report of the action of the 5th of March, was his noblest vindication,—and reduced to nothingness the falsities of those contemptible poltroons, who deserted the

* Napier.

† Ibid.

British general in his danger, and maligned him in his hour of success.

* * * * *

“I beg to congratulate you, and the brave troops under your command, on the signal victory which you gained on the 5th instant. I have no doubt whatever that their success would have had the effect of raising the siege of Cadiz, if the Spanish corps had made any effort to assist them; and I am equally certain, from your account of the ground, that if you had not decided with the utmost promptitude to attack the enemy, and if your attack had not been a most vigorous one, the whole allied army would have been lost.

“You have to regret that such a victory should not have been followed by all the consequences which might reasonably be expected from it; but you may console yourself with the reflection, that you did your utmost, and, at all events, saved the allied army; and that the failure in the extent of benefit to be derived from your exertions is to be attributed to those who would have derived most advantage from them.

“The conduct of the Spaniards throughout this expedition is precisely the same as I have ever observed it to be. They march the troops night and day, without provisions or rest, and abusing everybody who proposes a moment's delay to afford either to the famished and fatigued soldiers. They reach the enemy in such a state, as to be unable to make any exertion, or to execute any plan, even if any plan had been formed; and then, when the moment of action arrives, they are totally incapable of movement, and they stand by to see their allies destroyed, and afterwards abuse them because they do not continue, unsupported, exertions to which human nature is not equal.

“I concur in the propriety of your withdrawing to the Isla on the 6th, as much as I admire the promptitude and determination of your attack of the 5th; and I most

sincerely congratulate you, and the brave troops under your command, on your success.”*

It would have been well had the mischievous consequences of this military pilgrimage—for a rambling movement through lagunes and by-roads to surprise an enemy already on his guard, cannot properly be termed by any better name—ended with its own lame and impotent conclusion. The intelligence reached England with ominous rapidity, and it was the signal for a burst of popular indignation. Those who were unfriendly to the maintenance of a contest on the Peninsula, seized this as a favourable opportunity of protesting against its farther continuance; and men who, with clearer views, had hitherto supported ministers, and advocated the sound policy of keeping the battle at a distance, were now seriously alarmed, and began, in Lord Wellington’s words, to inquire—“Can such a people be saved? Are they worth saving?”†

A vote of thanks to General Graham and his gallant army, passed both Houses without a dissentient voice; but when the Ordnance Estimates were brought before the House a few days afterwards, the opposition took that opportunity of calling the attention of the nation to the worthlessness of that people, on whom they were lavishing so much treasure and so much blood. Mr. Ward, after alluding to the gross misconduct of the allies, thus proceeded:—

“Was it to be endured, that while the British troops were performing prodigies of valour in an unequal contest, that those allies, for whose independence they were fighting, should stand by, cold-blooded spectators of deeds, the bare recital of which should have been enough to warm every man of them into a hero? If, indeed, they had been so many mercenaries, and had been hired to fight for a foreign power, and in behalf of a foreign cause,—if they

* Despatch, Marinha, 25th March, 1811.

† Letter to Mr. Stuart, Cartaxo, 16th January, 1811.

had been so many Swiss,—in that case their breach of duty, however culpable, would have been less unaccountable, and perhaps more excusable; but here, where they were allies bound to this country in obligations greater than ever before one nation owed to another—our brave men lavishing those lives which their country had so much better right to claim, in defence of that cause in which those allies were principals—in such a case, tamely to look on while the contest between numbers and bravery hung in doubtful issue,—this did appear to him to betray an indifference, an apathy, which, if he could suppose it to prevail among the Spaniards, must render, in his mind, the cause of Spanish independence altogether hopeless.”

A feeble effort made by Mr. Perceval to deprecate any expression of parliamentary censure, until the House had fuller information than that which was contained in General Graham's despatches, elicited from Mr. Whitbread a sad but faithful picture of Spanish apathy and indifference.

“He should have been glad,” he said, “to have joined in the general expression of exultation when the vote of thanks was past;—he should have been glad to have added his mite to the general tribute in applause of the heroism of that day, and to have claimed the hero of that day as his much-valued friend. This he should have been glad to have done, if he could have had sufficient control over himself to have abstained from doing more. Mr. Perceval had spoken like the advocate of the Spaniards; they must be defended at all events, no matter how! And what was it that was attempted to be defended? The English army was on the point of being sacrificed—the Spaniards were in sight of them, within twenty minutes quick march of them! and what did they? Where were they? Why, just what they have been described by his honourable friend—cold-blooded spectators of the battle! After coldly witnessing a band of heroes fighting and dying for their cause, General Lapena tells our small army, exhausted with its unparalleled victory over numbers, that, forsooth, now was the time to push its

success. What did this redoubted general mean? Was it insult, or treachery, or cowardice,—each, or all? He did not mean to complain of the Spanish people, but of their officers. He should ever think of Barrosa as a day memorable for the glory of the Britons, and not less memorable for the infamy of the Spaniards. Was it to be endured, that our brave fellows should be so basely deserted, after an excessive night-march, the moment they entered the field, against a foe always formidable from discipline, and then doubly so from numbers? Why were the two battalions withdrawn from the heights of Barrosa? Why was their position abandoned precipitately to the French? Who gave this order but a Spanish officer? What! should not this excite a jealousy? Was this the first time a Spanish army had been cold-blooded spectators of British heroism? Did they want this to remind them of the stately indifference shown by Cuesta in the battle of Talavera? Was all sound in Cadiz? Was there no French party there? Were British armies never before betrayed till the battle of Barrosa? He said betrayed, for it was nothing less; the two battalions never came up till our army had repulsed the French, beaten them off, and was in hot pursuit of them as fast as our army could pursue—as fast as their exhausted limbs could carry their noble hearts! Then what had been our allies?—At Talavera nothing—at Barrosa nothing—or rather at both, perhaps, worse than nothing. The allied force sailed from Cadiz—the British fought—the Spaniards looked on. The British conquered; and yet the siege was not raised. Again he asked, was all sound at Cadiz? Was it true that General Graham had been obstructed and foiled in all his plans—that in the midst of the fight, while the British troops were doing feats, which, perhaps, British troops alone could do, their allies were doing what, he hoped, such men alone were capable of—plundering the British baggage? Was this true? It was not the Spanish people he complained of; he gave them every credit; but he gave their leaders none. If all this

was so, or nearly so, were the British armies to be risked so worthlessly? Were they to be abandoned to treachery or cowardice? For in either or both must have originated the unnatural, ungrateful, and infamous treatment they had met with."*

Such were the feelings entertained too generally in Britain towards the Spaniards; and the events which immediately succeeded the battle of Barrosa were not calculated to effect a favourable change in public sentiment. While the ferment caused by Lapena's misconduct was at its height, intelligence reached England that Badajoz had fallen, and a fortress, as yet unscathed by the enemy, had been lost through the treachery of its worthless governor!

After the destruction of Mendizabal's army, the French had pressed the siege with vigour, completed their second parallel, and carrying the sap to the covered way, their miners made preparations to blow down the counterscarp. Rafael Menacho, however, retrenched the streets; and as the fire of the place was superior to that of the French batteries, and the besiegers were annoyed by constant sallies of the garrison, Mortier was under serious apprehensions that his efforts to reduce the fortress would prove fruitless. Unfortunately, while personally directing a sortie to prevent the covered way from being crowned, the brave old Governor was killed by a cannon shot, and the command devolved upon a man, on whom it afterwards conferred an infamous celebrity.

Jose de Imaz had served under Romana in the north of Europe, and had been subsequently employed with the Spanish armies; and he now assumed the command of Badajoz under every encouragement. Of provisions and ammunition he had an ample supply, and his garrison comprised 8,500 effective men. The besiegers were sadly reduced by sickness and fatigue—the breach was impracticable—and the telegraph at Elvas informed him that Massena was in full retreat, and Wellington advancing to raise the siege,—

* Parliamentary Debates, 1811.

an assurance confirmed by a private letter, which a confidential messenger succeeded in delivering. "Imaz read the letter, and instantly surrendered, handing over, at the same moment, the intelligence thus obtained to the enemy."

But national pride required that some honourable token of respect should be offered by the enemy, as an attestation of his bravery; and Imaz demanded and obtained permission, that his grenadiers should defile through the breach. Alas! that fête was more difficult than he had imagined; the fracture in the escarpe was found too small, and Imaz was obliged to enlarge the opening himself. Not a French soldier would assist; they all stood looking on in silent contempt, while, with Spanish stateliness, and in all the pomp of full-blown ignominy, the governor of Badajoz marched out 8,000 men, in the presence of a besieging force which did not much exceed the number of his own garrison!

Was this base traitor shot or hanged? He was neither. To the indignant remonstrances of Lord Wellington the Spanish government tardily responded, and proceedings were instituted to bring Imaz to justice; but in tedious formalities they surpassed even those of an English Court of Equity, and they consequently outlived the war! It is not improbable but the worthy governor of Badajoz is now living, and enjoying the dignified ease which the purchase-money of his treason had secured.*

With the fall of Badajoz, Soult's expedition terminated. The reverses experienced in Andalusia demanded his immediate presence; and leaving Mortier to reduce Campo Mayor, after an unexampled success with means so comparatively small, the French marshal returned to resume the siege of Cadiz. Never was a campaign more splendid or more rapid. Within two months, the Duke of Dalmatia had taken more prisoners than exceeded the effective

* "Nobody entertains a doubt that Imaz sold Badajoz. He appears to have surrendered as soon as he could after he knew that relief was coming to him, lest his garrison should prevent the surrender when they should be certain of the truth of the intelligence of Massena's retreat."—*Despatch, Louzao, 16th March, 1811.*

strength of his whole corps when he marched from Seville to commence his operations. He had placed 10,000 more *hors de combat*, reduced four fortresses, and obtained the mastery in Estremadura. "Yet, great and daring and successful as his operations had been, the principal object of his expedition was frustrated, for Massena was in retreat, and Lord Wellington's combinations had palsied the hand of the conqueror."*

* Napier.



CHAPTER XVII.

MASSENA RETIRES BY THE LINE OF THE MONDEGO — DESPATCHES TO LORD LIVERPOOL—ORDER OF THE FRENCH RETREAT—AFFAIRS AT POMBAL AND REDINHA—RETREAT ON CONDEIXA AND PUENTE DE MURCELLA—POSITION TURNED—AFFAIR OF CAZAL NOVA—DESPATCH TO LORD LIVERPOOL—DISTRESS OF THE PORTUGUESE TROOPS—MISCONDUCT OF THE REGENCY—LETTER TO MR. STUART—INDIFFERENCE OF THE PORTUGUESE TO THEIR ALLIES—LETTERS TO MR. STUART—EXTRAORDINARY DEMANDS FOR COMPENSATION—LETTER TO LORD LIVERPOOL.

WHILE these events were progressing in Andalusia and Estremadura, Massena commenced a retreat, as admirable, in a military point of view, as it was execrable in a moral one. In his present position, the French marshal had no longer the means of remaining. "Sickness wasted the army, food became daily scarcer, the organization of the troops was seriously lessened, the leading generals were at variance, and the conspiracy to put St. Cyr at the head of the army in Spain, was by no means relinquished."* Aware that large reinforcements were expected by Lord Wellington, Massena appeared to await their arrival in the Tagus as his signal to retire. The transports, after a six weeks' passage, landed on the 2d of March; and the Prince of Essling, having been apprized, by a secret agent of the circumstance, broke up from Santarem on the morning of the 6th.

The French marshal had four lines open by which he might retreat; but that through the valley of the Mondego was the one which he determined to adopt; and in selecting

* Napier.

it, he secured a double route. By crossing the Mondego he might march upon Oporto, through a country as yet unexhausted, and therefore capable of affording supplies for his army while engaged in the operation; or by moving up by the left bank of the river, he had Guarda and Almeida in his rear. One objection existed to the adoption of a route by the Mondego. From the present position his corps occupied, he must execute a flank movement to his right to gain the actual line of his retreat; and burthened with 10,000 sick men, and the whole *matériel* of an army, this was a serious difficulty indeed.

With admirable skill, while removing his hospitals and baggage to the rear in the direction of Thomar, he still maintained a bold front, and seemed as if his intention was not to retire, but actually to cross the Zezere; while an able disposition of Ney's corps, which concentrated near Leyria, indicated that a movement on Torres Vedras was contemplated, and, of course, added to the uncertainty of Lord Wellington. On the night of the 5th, the grand business of the retreat commenced,—and the subsequent operations of the army of Portugal and the allied corps, were thus detailed by the British general, in a despatch to Lord Liverpool, dated Villa Seca, 14th March, 1811.

“The enemy retired from the position which they had occupied at Santarem and the neighbourhood on the night of the 5th instant. I put the British army in motion to follow them on the morning of the 6th.

“Their first movements indicated an intention to collect a force at Thomar; and I therefore marched upon that town, on the 8th, a considerable body of troops, formed of a part of Marshal Sir William Beresford's corps, under Major-General the Hon. W. Stewart, which had crossed the Tagus at Abrantes, and afterwards the Zezere, and of the 4th and 6th, and part of the 1st divisions of infantry, and two brigades of British cavalry.

“The enemy, however, continued his march towards the

Mondego, having one corps, the 2d, on the road of Espinhal, General Loison's division on the road of Ançiao, and the remainder of the army towards Pombal. These last were followed, and never lost sight of, by the light division, and the royal dragoons and 1st hussars, who took from them about 200 prisoners.

“On the 9th, the enemy having collected in front of Pombal the 6th corps, with the exception of General Loison's division, the 8th corps, and the 9th corps, and General Montbrun's division of cavalry, the hussars, which, with the royal dragoons and light division, were immediately in front of the enemy's lines, distinguished themselves in a charge which they made on this occasion, under the command of Colonel Arentschildt. A detachment of the 16th light dragoons, under Lieut. Weyland, which had been in observation of the enemy near Leyria, made prisoners a detachment consisting of thirty dragoons on that morning, and had followed the enemy from Leyria, and arrived on the ground just in time to assist their friends, the hussars, in this charge.

“I could not collect a sufficient body of troops to commence an operation upon the enemy till the 11th. On that day the 1st, 3d, 4th, 5th, and 6th, and the light divisions of infantry, and General Pack's brigade, and all the British cavalry, joined upon the ground immediately in front of the enemy, who had commenced their retreat from their position during the night.

“They were followed by the light division, the hussars and royals, and Brig.-General Pack's brigade, under the command of Major-General Sir William Erskine and Major-General Slade, and made an attempt to hold the ancient castle of Pombal, from which they were driven; but the 6th corps, and General Montbrun's cavalry, which formed the rear guard, supported by the 8th corps, held the ground on the other side of the town, the troops not having arrived in time to complete the dispositions to attack them before it was dark. Upon this occasion Lieut.-Colonel

Elder's battalion of Portuguese caçadores distinguished themselves.

"The enemy retired in the night; and on the 12th the 6th corps, with General Montbrun's cavalry, took up a strong position at the end of a defile, between Redinha and Pombal, with their right in a wood upon the Soure river, and their left extending towards the high ground above the river of Redinha. This town was in their rear.

"I attacked them in this position on the 12th, with the 3d and 4th divisions of infantry, and Brig.-General Pack's brigade, and the cavalry, the other troops being in reserve.

"The post in the wood upon their right was first forced by Sir William Erskine, with the light division. We were then able to form the troops in the plain beyond the defile; and the 3d division, under Major-General Picton, were formed in two lines, in the skirts of the wood, upon the right; the 4th division, under Major-General Cole, in two lines, in the centre, having General Pack's brigade supporting their right, and communicating with the 3d division; and the light division, in two lines, on the left. These troops were supported in the rear by the British cavalry; and the 1st, 5th, and 6th divisions were in reserve.

"The troops were formed with great accuracy and celerity; and Lieut.-General Sir Brent Spencer led the line against the enemy's position on the heights, from which they were immediately driven, with the loss of many men killed and wounded, and some prisoners.

"Major-General Sir William Erskine particularly mentioned the conduct of the 52d regiment, and Colonel Elder's caçadores, in the attack of the wood; and I must add that I have never seen the French infantry driven from a wood in more gallant style.

"There was but one narrow bridge, and a ford close to it, over the Redinha river, over which our light troops passed with the enemy; but as the enemy commanded these passages with cannon, some time elapsed before we could pass over a sufficient body of troops, and make a

fresh disposition to attack the heights on which they had again taken post. The 3d division crossed, however, and manœuvred again upon the enemy's left flank, while the light infantry and cavalry, supported by the light division, drove them upon their main body at Condeixa.

"The light infantry of General Picton's division, under Colonel Williams, and the 4th caçadores, under Colonel de Regoa, were principally concerned in this operation.

"We found the whole army yesterday, with the exception of the 2d corps, which was still at Espinhal, in a very strong position, at Condeixa; and I observed that they were sending off their baggage by the road of Ponte da Murcella. From this circumstance I concluded that Colonel Trant had not given up Coimbra, and that they had been so pressed in their retreat, that they had not been able to detach troops to force him from that place. I therefore marched the 3d division, under Major-General Picton, through the mountains upon the enemy's left, towards the only road open for their retreat, which had the immediate effect of dislodging them from the strong position of Condeixa; and the enemy encamped last night at Casal Nova, in the mountains, about a league from Condeixa.

"We immediately communicated with Coimbra, and made prisoners a detachment of the enemy's cavalry which were upon the road. We found the 6th and 8th corps formed in a very strong position near Casal Nova, this morning, and the light division attacked and drove in the outposts. But we could dislodge them from their positions only by movements on their flanks. Accordingly I moved the 4th division, under Major-General Cole, upon Panella, in order to secure the passage of the river Deixa and the communication with Espinhal, to which place Major-General Nightingale had been in observation of the movements of the enemy's corps since the 10th; and the 3d division, under Major-General Picton, moved immediately round the enemy's left; while the light division, and Brig.-General Pack's brigade, under Major-General Sir W.

Erskine, turned their right ; and Major-General Alexander Campbell, with the 6th division, supported the light troops, by which they were attacked in front. These troops were supported by the cavalry, and by the 1st and 5th divisions, and Colonel Ashworth's brigade in reserve. These movements obliged the enemy to abandon all the positions which they successively took in the mountains, and the *corps d'armée* composing the rear guard were flung back upon the main body, at Miranda de Corvo, upon the river Deixa, with considerable loss of killed, wounded, and prisoners.

* * * * *

“The result of these operations has been that we have saved Coimbra and Upper Beira from the enemy's ravages ; we have opened the communications with the northern provinces ; and we have obliged the enemy to take for their retreat the road by Ponte da Murcella, on which they may be annoyed by the militia acting in security upon their flank, while the allied army will press upon their rear.

“The whole country, however, affords many advantageous positions to a retreating army, of which the enemy have shown that they know how to avail themselves. They are retreating from the country, as they entered it, in one solid mass, covering their rear on every march by the operations of either one or two *corps d'armée* in the strong positions which the country affords ; which *corps d'armée* are closely supported by the main body. Before they quitted their position they destroyed a part of their cannon and ammunition, and they have since blown up whatever the horses were unable to draw away. They have no provisions, excepting what they plunder on the spot, or, having plundered, what the soldiers carry on their backs, and live cattle.

“I am concerned to be obliged to add to this account, that their conduct throughout this retreat has been marked by a barbarity seldom equalled, and never surpassed. Even in the towns of Torres Novas, Thomar, and Pernes, in which the head quarters of some of the corps had been for four

months, and in which the inhabitants had been invited, by promises of good treatment, to remain, they were plundered, and many of their houses destroyed, on the night the enemy withdrew from their position, and they have since burnt every town and village through which they have passed. The convent of Alcobaça was burnt by order from the French head quarters. The bishop's palace, and the whole town of Leyria, in which General Drouet had had his head quarters, shared the same fate; and there is not an inhabitant of the country of any class or description, who has had any dealing or communication with the French army, who has not had reason to repent of it and to complain of them. This is the mode in which the promises have been performed, and the assurances have been fulfilled, which were held out in the proclamation of the French commander in chief, in which he told the inhabitants of Portugal that he was not come to make war upon them, but with a powerful army of 110,000 men to drive the English into the sea.

“It is to be hoped that the example of what has occurred in this country will teach the people of this and of other nations what value they ought to place on such promises and assurances; and that there is no security for life, or for anything which makes life valuable, excepting in decided resistance to the enemy.

“I have the honour to enclose returns of killed and wounded in the several affairs with the enemy since they commenced their retreat.

* * * *

“I am sorry to inform your Lordship that Badajoz surrendered on the 11th instant. I have not yet received the particulars of this event, but I have no doubt of the fact.

“Since the enemy entered Estremadura, and has directed his efforts against that place, my attention has been drawn to the means of saving it; and Mr. Wellesley will have transmitted to England the copies of the correspondence which I have had with the Spanish officers upon this subject.

“Before the unfortunate battle of the 19th February

I had intended to reinforce the Spanish army with about 14,000 men from that under my command ; and thus to force the enemy to raise the siege, as soon as I should have been joined by the reinforcement which I expected would arrive in the Tagus by the end of January. I could not detach with safety till that reinforcement should arrive.

“The battle of the 19th of February destroyed the Spanish troops upon whose assistance and cooperation I relied ; and then it would have been impossible to detach a body of troops sufficient to effect the purpose, even after the arrival of the reinforcements, till the enemy should be removed from the Tagus. I had therefore determined to attack the enemy in his positions as soon as the reinforcements should arrive, if the weather should be such as to render the roads at all passable.

“The reinforcements arrived in the first days of March, but have not yet joined the army ; and on the 5th, at night, the enemy withdrew from their positions.

“On the 6th, General Leite, the governor of Elvas, began to inform the governor of Badajoz, by signal or otherwise, that Massena had retired, and that he might expect assistance as soon as it was in my power to give it to him ; and that he must hold out till the last extremity. I had made all the arrangements for detaching the force immediately upon the enemy's quitting the Tagus and Zezere, and some of the troops actually marched from Thomar on the morning of the 9th ; and others, that part of Sir William Beresford's corps which had not crossed the Tagus, were put in motion ; and their head has arrived within three marches of Elvas.

“I received at Thomar, on the morning of the 9th, accounts of a most favourable nature from Badajoz, from which I was induced to believe, not only that the place was in no danger, but that it was in fact untouched ; that its fire was superior to that of the enemy, and that it was in no want of provisions or ammunition, had sustained no loss, excepting that of the governor, Menacho, and was able and likely to hold out for a month. General Imaz, a person of equally

good reputation, succeeded to the command; and the greatest confidence was reposed in him.

“On the same afternoon of the 9th I was with the British advanced guard at Pombal, and saw in front of that town the collection of the enemy's troops which I have above recited to your Lordship. It appeared to me then, that I must decide either to allow the enemy to retreat from Portugal unmolested, by the road he should prefer, and expose Coimbra and Upper Beira to be ravaged; or that I must draw to the army some of the troops, cavalry particularly, which I had allotted for the expedition to Badajoz, and which still remained at Thomar. I accordingly called to the army the 4th division of infantry and a brigade of heavy cavalry, under the conviction that Badajoz would hold out for the time during which it should be necessary to employ them. Experience has shown me that I could not have done without these troops; and it is also very clear, that if I had left them behind, they could not have saved Badajoz, which place the governor surrendered on the day after he received my assurances that he should be relieved, and my entreaty that he would hold out to the last moment.

“It is useless to add any reflection to these facts. The Spanish nation have lost Tortosa, Olivença, and Badajoz, in the course of two months, without sufficient cause; and in the same period, Marshal Soult, with a corps never supposed to be more than 20,000 men, has taken, besides the last two places, or destroyed above 22,000 Spanish troops.”*

The difficulty of obtaining means of transport for his sick men, obliged Massena to destroy such stores as might be dispensed with, and the guns he could not horse efficiently. Every encumbrance had been removed four marches in his rear, and thus a great object was achieved before his retreat virtually commenced. To his reserve cavalry the protection of the sick and wounded was entrusted. They led the march, followed by the 8th corps; and the 6th, the light cavalry, and the best of his artillery formed an imposing rear guard.

* Dated Louzao, 16th March, 1811.

The skirmish at Pombal was most creditable to the British light troops, as well as to the caçadores of the 3d division, who were engaged. The old castle which the French had occupied was bravely carried—and the enemy driven from the town so vigorously, that they were unable to fire a mine, already prepared and charged, and the bridge was thus fortunately saved.

At Redinha, Ney's dispositions were those of an able soldier. Ground, highly favourable in itself, was advantageously occupied, and with such skill, as rendered it impossible for Lord Wellington to form an accurate opinion of the amount of force that held it. With his right outflanked by Erskine, and Picton on the wooded heights upon his left, the Duke of Echlingen boldly held his position, drove in the skirmishers of the 3d division, and masked his real strength so well, that Wellington hesitated to attack until additional troops were brought forward.

“In this posture both sides remained for about an hour, when three shots were fired from the British centre as a signal for a forward movement, and a most splendid spectacle of war was exhibited. The woods seemed alive with troops; and in a few moments thirty thousand men, forming three gorgeous lines of battle, were stretched across the plain, but bending on a gentle curve, and moving majestically onwards, while horsemen and guns, springing forward simultaneously from the centre and from the left wing, charged under a general volley from the French battalions: the latter were instantly hidden by the smoke, and when that cleared away no enemy was to be seen.”*

Availing himself of the breathing-time his masterly dispositions had gained, Ney had rapidly withdrawn his right while Wellington's formations were being made; and while the light troops of his left held Picton's skirmishers in check, the village of Redinha was gained.

War seems at times to be an inexplicable science—the object sought so immeasurably below the means required to obtain it. This was strongly instanced at Redinha. A

dismounted howitzer, unserviceable in itself, produced a furious conflict. Although the village was in flames, Ney personally remained under a heavy cannonade, while "the light troops of the 3d division, chasing like heated bloodhounds, passed the river almost at the same time with the French." The marshal carried off the useless metal; but pressed steadily by Lord Wellington, after a short stand on the heights above the village, he continued his retreat to Condeixa.

Here, on the morning of the 13th, Massena was found; and his whole army, with the exception of the second corps, drawn up in order of battle. His position was particularly strong, and from the pains he had bestowed in adding to the natural protection which a morass in front of the heights occupied by Ney's corps afforded, the allies concluded that it was the French marshal's intention to make this the limit of his retreat. Deceived, however, by an exaggerated report of Trant's strength at Coimbra, the Prince of Essling declined passing the Mondego, and retreated by Puente de Murcella.

Lord Wellington had penetrated his opponent's design, and detached Picton's division to cross the Sierra de Ancão by a mountain road, and turn the left of the enemy. Believing that their position was perfectly secure, the astonishment of the French army was unbounded, when the red columns of the English were seen far in the rear of their left, winding round the base of a mountain ridge which had previously concealed their march. Ney's camp was instantly broken up; while covered by the smoke of Condeixa, which he fired to conceal his movements, and favoured by the obstacles which abatis and stocades presented to the advance of the pursuers, the marshal reached Casal Nova, closely followed by the British skirmishers. Massena, who was at Fonte Coberta, had nearly been made a prisoner; and it was reported that he escaped capture "by taking the feathers out of his hat, and riding through some of the light troops."*

* Napier.

Next morning, at dawn of day, the light division moved forward; and owing to a culpable want of discretion in its commanding officer, who, from the dense fog which obscured every object at the distance of a few paces, should have cautiously felt his way as he advanced, the 52d regiment found itself, on a sudden clearance of the weather, completely within the French outposts, and engaged, alone and unsupported, with the whole of Ney's corps. The British light troops were instantly pushed into action to relieve a regiment so seriously endangered, and a fierce combat ensued. Gradually Picton and Cole got upon the left flank of the enemy; the other divisions, with the heavy cavalry and batteries advanced against the centre, and Ney was driven from his ground; but with consummate skill he executed an orderly retreat, maintaining ridge after ridge, until he fell back on the main body of the French army, who occupied the strong position of Miranda de Corvo.

A second despatch,* addressed to Lord Liverpool, from Louzao, thus continues the details of his operations.

“Major-General Cole joined Major-General Nightingale at Espinhal on the afternoon of the 13th; and this movement, by which the Deixa was passed, and which gave us the power of turning the strong position of Miranda de Corvo, induced the enemy to abandon it on that night. They destroyed at this place a great number of carriages, and burned and otherwise destroyed, or consumed, the ammunition which they had carried; they likewise burned much of their baggage; and the road throughout the march from Miranda is strewed with the carcasses of men and animals, and destroyed carriages and baggage.

“We found the enemy's whole army yesterday in a very strong position on the Ceira, having one corps as an advanced guard in front of Foz d'Aronce, on this side of the river.

“I immediately made arrangements to drive in the

* Dated 16th March, 1811.

advanced guard, preparatory to the movements which it might be expedient to make to cross the Ceira this morning.*

“Brig.-General Pack’s brigade had been detached in the morning through the mountains to the left, as well to turn the enemy in his position at Miranda de Corvo as in view to any others they might take up on this side of the Ceira. The light division, under Major-General Sir William Erskine, was ordered to possess some heights immediately above Foz d’Aronce, while Major-General Picton’s division was moved along the great road to attack the left of the enemy’s position and of the village.

“The 6th division, under Major-General Campbell, and the hussars and 16th dragoons, supported the light division; and the 1st division, and the 14th, and royal dragoons, the 3d.

“These movements succeeded in forcing the enemy to abandon his strong positions on this side of the Ceira with considerable loss. The colonel of the 39th regiment was made prisoner.

“The light troops of General Picton’s division under Colonel Williams, and those of General Nightingale’s brigade, were principally engaged on the right; and the 95th regiment in front of the light division. The troops behaved in the most gallant manner. The horse artillery likewise, under Captains Ross and Bull, distinguished themselves upon this occasion.

“The troops took much baggage and some ammunition carriages in Foz d’Aronce.

* The combat at Foz d’Aronce was one of those sudden conceptions which so frequently marked the military operations of Lord Wellington. One rapid glance satisfied the English general that Ney could be advantageously attacked, and with characteristic celerity, its execution followed. The French left wing was overthrown; and as darkness added to the surprise which an unexpected attack occasioned, in their confusion the enemy fired upon each other, while many missed the fords and perished in the river, and others were trodden to death upon the bridge, by the impetuous rush of their own comrades from the village. With a loss of sixty men and four officers, five hundred of the French were killed or drowned; and when the Ceira fell, an eagle was recovered, which had been thrown into that river by its bearer.

“ I had been prevented from moving till a late hour in the morning by the fog ; and it was dark by the time we gained possession of the last position of the enemy’s advanced guard.

“ In the night the enemy destroyed the bridge on the Ceira, and retreated, leaving a small rear guard on the river.

“ The destruction of the bridge at Foz d’Aronce, the fatigue which the troops have undergone for several days, and the want of supplies, have induced me to halt the army this day.

“ Marshal Sir William Beresford and I had repeatedly urged the governors of the kingdom to adopt measures to supply the troops with regularity, and to keep up the establishments while the army was in cantonments on the Rio Mayor river ; which representations were not attended to ; and when the army was to move forward, the Portuguese troops had no provisions, nor any means of conveying any to them. They were to move through a country ravaged and exhausted by the enemy ; and it is literally true, that General Pack’s brigade, and Colonel Ashworth’s, had nothing to eat for four days, although constantly marching or engaged with the enemy.

“ I was obliged either to direct the British commissary-general to supply the Portuguese troops, or to see them perish for want ; and the consequence is, that the supplies intended for the British troops are exhausted, and we must halt till more come up, which I hope will be this day.

“ Since I addressed your lordship on the 14th instant, I have heard further particulars respecting the surrender of Badajoz. It appears that, on the 9th, the enemy had made a breach in the place about eighteen feet wide, but which was by no means practicable. On the same day the governor acknowledged by signal the receipt of the message which I had sent him ; on the 10th he suspended hostilities, and on the 11th surrendered the place, the garrison being prisoners of war, and marching out with the honours of war,

to the number of 9,000, to an army which at the period of the surrender amounted only to 9,600 infantry, and 2,000 cavalry. The garrison wanted neither ammunition nor provisions.

“ In my letter of the 6th, I had desired the Governor of Elvas to urge the Governor of Badajoz to keep secret the intelligence of Massena’s retreat, lest, by means of deserters it should reach the enemy, whom I was in hopes that I should have found engaged in this siege. But he published the intelligence as soon as he received it, stating at the same time that he did not believe it. He likewise communicated it to the French general.

“ Since the fall of Badajoz the enemy have turned their attention to Campo Mayor, and have moved in that direction.”

With a very small force, Ney secured a safe passage for his artillery and stores; and then, having blown up the greater portion of the bridge, he held the right bank of the river, until Massena had crossed the Alva.

Circumstances favoured the French retreat. Rain fell in torrents—the rivers rose with the rapidity so common in a hilly country; and the villanous misconduct of the Portuguese government, at this trying moment, was painfully displayed. Massena’s retreating army was amply provisioned; and the advancing columns of the allies were actually threatened with starvation. For the Portuguese troops no means of subsistence had been provided by their own executive,—from actual inanition they were unable to get on,—and but for the assistance rendered by the British commissariat, they must have actually perished from mere hunger. No language can describe the shameful misconduct of the regency. The most flimsy pretexts were made apologies for the most iniquitous neglect. To the wants of their own soldiers, as well as to those of their allies, they were equally indifferent,—a scarcity of fuel in a country abounding in wood, was a plea for the starvation of the

one,*—and when reinforcements landed in the Tagus, they were left in the streets of Lisbon without a meal, or even a bed to rest upon.†

The following letter to Mr. Stuart describes the wretched state of the Portuguese army, and that, too, at the commencement of a campaign, when so much depended on their efficiency.

* * * * *

“ It is useless to propose any arrangement for this or any other purpose, if the Portuguese government will execute nothing.

“ I repeat, that matters cannot go on as they are ; there must be a radical change in the whole of the system of the

* “ I enclose a note which Stuart has sent to me regarding one of your bridges, which it appears, in its present form, prevents the arrival of wood at Lisbon ; and *the want of wood to bake biscuit is now the reason that the Portuguese troops can get no provisions !* It is like the house that Jack built.”—*Extract of Letter to Marshal Beresford.*

† “ I declare that I think it disgraceful to the Portuguese government, and to the people of Lisbon in particular, that such a proposition should have been made as has come from Dom Miguel Forjaz. They have now part of one battalion in Lisbon, and some convalescents at Belem ; some of the officers attached to whom must be lodged in the town. They have besides some sick and wounded officers there, and occasionally a regiment passes a night or two in Lisbon, when it lands from England or from Cadiz. Are the people of Lisbon so inhospitable that the officers of these corps must be put, on their landing, into cold, damp, and dark empty houses, without the chance of getting anything to eat ? Is there an inn or tavern at Lisbon to which an officer can go in such circumstances ?

“ But I forgot the general officers of the army, those upon the staff, the officers of the guards (for the others can but ill afford the expense), do occasionally go to Lisbon for a day or two for their amusement. Is Dom Miguel Forjaz serious in expressing a wish that officers of this description should go into empty houses, or into the street ? Is this the mode in which the cause of Portugal is to be made popular in the British army ? Is every consideration to be sacrificed to the caprice and ease of the people of Lisbon ? Are officers of this class—am I and Marshal Beresford—to be provided with a lodging upon billet ; but the others, who go there upon duty, and who can less afford, or bear the hardship, be put into the empty houses or into the street ? As for my part, I do not go often to Lisbon ; *but if the rule is made for one class it must for all, and I will have no lodging upon billet any more than any other officer of the army.*”
—*Extract of Letter to Mr. Stuart.*”

government in respect to the resources for carrying on the war, or I shall recommend to his Majesty's government to withdraw his army.

“ It is a favourite notion with some members of the government, that the Portuguese troops can do with very little or no food. Among other good qualities, they possess that of being patient under privations in an extraordinary degree. But men cannot perform the labour of soldiers without food. Three of General Pack's brigade died of famine yesterday on their march, and above one hundred and fifty have fallen out from weakness, many of whom must have died from the same cause.

“ The government neglected both establishments and troops when they were on the Rio Mayor river, and neither are in the state in which they ought to be at the commencement of a campaign. The mules of the artillery are unable to draw the guns for want of food, for any length of time; the baggage mules of the army are nearly all dead of famine; and the drivers have neither been paid nor fed.

“ This is the state of the army at the commencement of the campaign: and I see clearly that, unless the government should change their system, no remedy will be applied, and the whole burden of defending this country will fall upon Great Britain.

“ I have this day told General Pack and Colonel Ashworth that, if they cannot procure food for their troops with the army, they must go to Coimbra, or elsewhere where they can, as I cannot bear to see and hear of brave soldiers dying for want of common care.

“ One consequence, therefore, of omitting to feed the troops, will be to throw us again upon the defensive in this part of the country; another consequence, also, which I seriously apprehend, is, that the British officers serving with the Portuguese troops will resign their situations: one of them spoke to me seriously upon the subject of the state of the troops this day, and declared his intention to resign if a remedy was not applied.

“I beg you to lay this letter before the Portuguese government, and to forward it to be laid before his Royal Highness the Regent, and his Royal Highness the Prince Regent of Portugal.”

That the Portuguese were in no ways anxious to render assistance to their allies, the following letters from Lord Wellington demonstrate. One was elicited by a formal complaint, charging the troops with the grave offence of cutting fire-wood; the other, in reference to a claim set forth for remuneration by an individual; and both sufficiently prove how little the Portuguese, from the prince to the peasant, were inclined to sacrifice to the work of their national deliverance.

“I have had the honour of receiving your letter of the 9th instant, on a complaint said by Dom Miguel Forjaz to be made of the conduct of the British troops at Salvaterra; which complaint, you will observe, refers not to the conduct of the British troops, but to that of the Portuguese regiments Nos. 4 and 10.

“In respect to the charge of cutting barren wood in the royal parks for fire-wood, I have to reply that I suppose his Royal Highness does not propose that his Majesty’s troops shall want fire-wood in Portugal. It is reasonable that his Royal Highness, as well as other proprietors, should be paid for the wood cut upon his demesnes; but either the troops must be allowed to cut fire-wood, paying for the same, wherever the defence of his Royal Highness’s dominions renders it necessary that they should be stationed, or they must be removed to the places where they can cut fire-wood, by which his Royal Highness’s interests must suffer.

“I cannot avoid adverting to the disposition recently manifested by the government to complain of the conduct of the British troops, certainly, in this instance, without foundation.

“Acts of misconduct, and even outrage, I admit, have been committed, but never with impunity in any instance in which the complaint could be substantiated; and I have not

yet been able to obtain the punishment of any individual of this country, be his crimes what they may.

“If the British soldiers have committed, as all soldiers do commit, acts of misconduct, they have at least fought bravely for the country. They have besides recently shown that commiseration for the misfortunes of the people of this country which I am convinced will be equally felt by their countrymen at home, and actually fed the poor inhabitants of all the towns in which they were cantoned on the Rio Mayor river. Yet I have not heard that the Portuguese government have expressed their approbation of this conduct, very unusual in people of this class and description; nor do I find that either their bravery in the field, or their humanity, or their generosity, can induce those whom they are serving to look with indulgence at their failings, or to draw a veil over the faults of the few, in consideration of the military and other virtues of the many.”*

* * * * *

“I have had the honour of receiving your letter of the 9th instant, containing a complaint of the Conde de Castello Melhor, that olive trees are cut on his estate near Bucellas, for the purpose of making abatis.

“I beg that the government will be pleased to determine :

“First, whether the works which have once saved Lisbon shall be rendered as complete as they can be made before the enemy may approach them again, or whether we are to wait till the last moment to complete what may be done beforehand.

“Secondly, that they will determine whether any, and what, sums of money shall be paid to individuals for the damage done to their property by these works; and

“Thirdly, that they will order payment to be made to all the individuals in this situation, as well as to the Conde de Castello Melhor.

“Considering that this gentleman is a man of high family, who, it is supposed, will save his property from robbery

* Louzao, 16th March, 1811.

and confiscation, and his person from slavery, and his family from violation and outrage, by the measures adopted for the salvation of the country, it might have been expected that he would not have been the first to demand from the government payment for the damage which those measures do to him." *

That a demand of this description should create disgust in the mind of the British general may be readily believed. A claim, seeking remuneration for a paltry loss, might be extenuated by a plea of indigence; but in a noble of the land—a personage of large estate, in the application there was the most contemptible meanness. The time, also, when the claim was preferred, was unfortunate; at that period, on account of the expense incurred by its maintenance on the Peninsula, the recall of the British army was seriously contemplated by the ministry; and while England, during the past year, had expended nine millions in supporting the cause of Spain and Portugal, the Regent grudged fire-wood for the bivouacs of his allies; and the Conde de Castello Melhor was asking a pecuniary consideration, for the very means employed to preserve his estates from spoliation.

Whatever intentions the British government might have previously entertained of removing their army from the Peninsula, they appear to have been abandoned after the following letter was received at home. As a document, the information it contains renders it exceedingly valuable; and the sound reasoning with which it concludes, must have gone far in confirming such of the British cabinet as might have been hitherto in doubt respecting the policy of keeping the battle at a distance.

“I have received your letter of the 20th February, to which I should not have troubled you with a reply, if I did not conceive that Government have taken an erroneous view of their expenditure and their situation in this country.

* Louzao, 16th March, 1811.

“ You tell me that the campaign of 1810, in the Peninsula, has cost nine millions sterling, including the transports, and six millions exclusive of transports, &c.; and you compare the expense of this campaign with that of 1808, which cost 2,778,000*l.*, and with that of 1809, which cost 2,639,000*l.* The very statement of this comparison, without adverting to the error of omitting the transports and stores, &c. sent in kind in 1808 and 1809, points out the error of all calculations of this description.

“ The British army in the Peninsula, in 1808, was larger and more expensive than any that has been here since, and attended by an equal fleet of transports; but it began to arrive only in August, and the expense incurred was in the last five months of the year. Many of those expenses, viz. two months’ advanced pay to the troops, &c., debts left unpaid in Spain and Portugal, were not paid in the Peninsula, or if paid in the Peninsula, not within the period of the account.

“ Now, in order to show a fair comparison between the years 1808 and 1810, the charges of the same troops which were in the Peninsula in the latter end of 1808, for the seven first months of the year, should be added to the 2,778,000*l.*, and I believe it would be found that the amount would not be much less than the six millions, which is the stated amount of the expense of 1810.

“ During a great part of 1809 no subsidy was paid to the Portuguese government, and the total amount of the subsidy was not half what has been paid in 1810.

“ The British army, also, for more than half the year, did not consist of 20,000 men; but if to the 2,639,000*l.* are to be added the expenses of the troops in America, in Walcheren, &c. &c., which joined the army in Portugal, and swelled the expense here in 1810, it will be found that their expense would not fall far short of six millions sterling.

“ In my opinion, government are not aware, and have it not in their power at present to form an opinion, of the exact expense of the war in the Peninsula. The first step

to ascertain it would be to analyse the charge, and then to see what the same army would cost them elsewhere, at home, for instance; for I suppose that if the army should be withdrawn from the Peninsula, it would not be disbanded.

“I conclude that the amount of six millions is made up from the payments at the Treasury on account of the commissary-general, and the payments on account of Mr. Stuart’s drafts for the Portuguese government; but if these sums are analysed, there will be found one million in round numbers for the Portuguese subsidy; 200,000*l.* advanced to the Portuguese government, and repaid to the Treasury by the Portuguese ambassador; 300,000*l.* advanced to purchase provisions in Ireland, to be repaid in this year’s subsidy; 400,000*l.* advanced to buy provisions in America, for the repayment of which the provisions themselves will provide; making nearly two millions, of which one million either has been or will be repaid this year.

“Then it has cost one million, or 20 per cent. nearly, to find specie for the army.

“Let us now see, generally, what this army would cost in England.

“The advances in Portugal only have been lately 80,000*l.* per mensem: they will now be 100,000*l.* per mensem. If the army was in England, the advances would be nearly double: at all events for the army now in the Peninsula, they would amount to 2,000,000*l.* per annum, without beer money, marching money, barrack allowances, forage for the cavalry, ordnance expenses, hospitals, &c. &c., all of which are covered by the amount of the six millions.

“I request your lordship, then, just to consider what is the real amount of the late expense incurred by your operations in the Peninsula.

“The heavy expense of the army, and one which is peculiar to a British army, is the transports, and to that I have nearly put an end; but I would observe, that of late years the government have seldom been without tonnage in their service for their whole disposable force; and it is not taking

a just view of the subject to say that the army in Portugal, in 1810, cost a large sum in transports, when the same regiments had probably the same transports in their suit in 1808 in Sweden, and in 1809 in America or Walcheren.

“ In the sum of three millions stated for transports and stores sent out in kind, I imagine about half would be for transports, the other half for stores. Were no stores sent out to Portugal or Spain in 1808 or 1809? But there is another question upon these stores, which I admit are to be considered as part of the expense of the army, and that is, What is the value of the remains at the present moment? If it be true, as it is, that we have three months’ supply for this army of many articles now in store, which were sent from England in 1810, it is not a true calculation to state that the stores consumed in 1810 cost 1,500,000%.

“ The establishments of the country are certainly enormous and very expensive, let them be used where they may; but I deny that the use of them is more expensive in the Peninsula than elsewhere, or that because six millions have been spent in the Peninsula in 1810, it follows that the whole scale of expense of the empire has been increased to that amount in that year beyond the former years, in any other way, or to any greater amount, than by the expense of the Portuguese subsidy; the expense of having troops in the field abroad, instead of in quarters at home; the expense of procuring specie; and the additional price of some articles of consumption purchased in the Peninsula, which, in all, I do not calculate for the whole Peninsula at more than three millions sterling.

“ In respect to the transports, there is another view of the subject, which would show that a stronger army would be a saving of expense. If I had had 10,000 men more in 1810, I would not have kept the transports; and I send them away now, because I think that the events of the campaign have brought the enemy to such a situation that the necessity for an embarkation is very remote. The transports (if not kept in government pay after being sent away from the

Tagus) would cost much more than 10,000 additional troops to this army; and much more than the difference of expense in the employment of 10,000 additional troops here, instead of keeping them at Cadiz, in Sicily, or Gibraltar, or at home.

“My opinion has invariably been, that it was the interest of Great Britain to employ in Portugal the largest army that could be spared from other services; and that no more than 2,000 or 2,500 men ought to have been stationed at Cadiz, which would not have cost a shilling more than their pay. The expense at Cadiz, which I imagine will amount to no trifle, out of the six or nine millions, has been, in my opinion, entirely thrown away, equally with the services of the troops, which would have made a great difference here early in the last summer.

“In respect to offensive or defensive operations here, if they are left to me, I shall carry on either the one or the other, according to the means in my power, compared at the time with those of the enemy, and bearing in mind always your lordship’s instructions of the 27th February, 1810, marked A.

“I would recommend to government to increase the force here as much as possible, putting down the establishments elsewhere, and of course decreasing the expense in those parts of the empire from which they draw the troops. By this measure they will put it in the power of the officer here to avail himself of every opportunity, they will be sure of holding this country as long as they please, and they will save the whole expense of transports.

“I shall be sorry if government should think themselves under the necessity of withdrawing from this country on account of the expense of the contest. From what I have seen of the objects of the French government, and the sacrifices they make to accomplish them, I have no doubt that if the British army were for any reason to withdraw from the Peninsula, and the French government were relieved from the pressure of military operations on the Continent, *they*

would incur all risks to land an army in His Majesty's dominions. Then indeed would commence an expensive contest ; then would His Majesty's subjects discover what are the miseries of war, of which, by the blessing of God, they have hitherto had no knowledge ; and the cultivation, the beauty, and prosperity of the country, and the virtue and happiness of its inhabitants would be destroyed, whatever might be the result of the military operations. God forbid that I should be a witness, much less an actor in the scene ; and I only hope that the King's government will consider well what I have above stated to your lordship ; will ascertain, as nearly as is in their power, the actual expense of employing a certain number of men in this country beyond that of employing them at home or elsewhere ; and will keep up their force here on such a footing as will at all events secure their possession without keeping the transports, if it does not enable their commander to take advantage of events, and assume the offensive."*

* Letter to Lord Liverpool, Santa Marinha, 23d March, 1811.



CHAPTER XVIII.

SUPERIOR TALENTS OF LORD WELLINGTON—BARBARITIES OF THE FRENCH—DESTRUCTION OF ALCobaça AND BATALHA—LEYRIA DEVASTATED—POMBAL RUINED—CONTINUATION OF MASSENA'S RETREAT—HE IS FORCED FROM THE SIERRA DE MOITA, AND RETIRES ON GUARDA—NEY AND MASSENA QUARREL, AND THE FORMER IS DEPRIVED OF HIS COMMAND—THE FRENCH ARE DRIVEN FROM GUARDA—TAKE A POSITION ON THE RIGHT BANK OF THE COA—DESPATCH TO LORD LIVERPOOL—AFFAIR AT SABUGAL—GALLANTRY OF THE LIGHT DIVISION—MASSENA ABANDONS PORTUGAL—MORAL EFFECT OF THE CAMPAIGN—INEFFICIENCY OF CLOSE COLUMNS AGAINST BRITISH TROOPS IN LINE.

THE military skill displayed by the allied general during his advance in pursuit of Massena, proved him to be a master of the art of war. Never had a retreating army a more favourable country for its operations; and never was any permitted to avail itself so little of these advantages. Although every league he crossed offered to the Prince of Essling some position of matchless strength, it was seldom more than occupied, when some beautiful movement of Lord Wellington turned a flank, and caused its immediate abandonment,—science thus effecting without the expenditure of a cartridge, what, with a less intelligent commander, would have required an enormous sacrifice of life.

While these splendid operations of Lord Wellington established his military superiority over him surnamed by Napoleon "*l'enfant gâté de la victoire*"—the results of his successes were of paramount value in a moral point of view. Coimbra and the Upper Beira were saved; and a great city and valuable district thus escaped the fearful visitation of a relentless enemy, whose ravages had "sent fear before, and left ruin behind their track."

It is a painful task, even at this distant day, to recall to memory the frightful atrocities, which stamped an undying infamy on the retreat of the French army out of Portugal; and the detail of the barbarities they perpetrated, would now be considered too horrible for credence, were they not faithfully established by the evidence of those who were actual eye-witnesses. Colonel Napier relates the following revolting story of human suffering:—

“ This day’s march disclosed a horrible calamity. A large house, situated in an obscure part of the mountains, was discovered, filled with starving persons. Above thirty women and children had sunk, and, sitting by the bodies, were fifteen or sixteen survivors, of whom one only was a man, but all so enfeebled as to be unable to eat the little food we had to offer them. The youngest had fallen first; all the children were dead; none were emaciated in the bodies, but the muscles of the face were invariably drawn transversely, giving the appearance of laughing, and presenting the most ghastly sight imaginable. The man seemed most eager for life; the women appeared patient and resigned, and, even in this distress, had arranged the bodies of those who first died, with decency and care.”

Again, he says:—“ Every horror that could make war hideous attended this dreadful march! Distress, conflagrations, death, in all modes! from wounds, from fatigue, from water, from the flames, from starvation! On every side unlimited violence,* unlimited vengeance! I myself saw a peasant hounding on his dog, to devour the dead and dying; and the spirit of cruelty once unchained smote even the brute creation. On the 15th the French general, to diminish the encumbrances of his march, ordered a number

* “ The little town of Manteigas was less fortunate. The inhabitants of the adjoining country, confiding in the situation of a place, which was, as they hoped, concealed in the heart of the Sierra de Estrella, had brought their women and children thither, and their most valuable effects; but it was discovered, and in spite of a desperate defence, the town was stormed by a force as superior in number as in arms. The officers carried off the handsomest women; the rest were given up to the mercy of men as brutal as their leaders.”—*Southey*.

of beasts of burthen to be destroyed ; the inhuman fellow, charged with the execution, hamstrung 500 asses and left them to starve, and thus they were found by the British army on that day. The mute but deep expression of pain and grief, visible in these poor creatures' looks, wonderfully roused the fury of the soldiers ; and so little weight has reason with the multitude, when opposed by a momentary sensation, that no quarter would have been given to any prisoner at that moment."

The towns of Redinha, Condeixa, and Miranda de Corvo, with all the villages in their line of march, were burnt by the French rear guards. To cover their regressive movements by the smoke of the blazing houses might present a cause, although it could not offer an excuse. But other ravages were apparently committed out of mere wantonness ; and, as was the case with respect to Leyria and Alcobaça, the order for their destruction was issued by Massena himself.

" The most venerable structure in Portugal was the convent of Alcobaça. Its foundation was coeval with the monarchy. It had been the burial-place of the kings of Portugal for many generations. The munificence of nobles and princes, the craft of superstition, and the industry and learning of its members in better times, had contributed to fill this splendid pile with treasures of every kind. Its gorgeous vestments, its vessels of plate and gold, and its almost matchless jewelry, excited the admiration of the vulgar ; the devotee and the philosopher were equally astonished at the extraordinary articles in its relic-room ; the artist and the antiquary beheld with wonder and delight its exquisite monuments of ancient art ; and its archives and library were as important to Portuguese literature, as the collections of the Museum or the Bodleian are in our own country. Orders were issued from the French headquarters to burn this place ; that the work of destruction might be complete, it was begun in time, and the mattock and hammer were employed to destroy what the flames

would have spared. The tessellated pavement from the entrance to the high altar was broken up with pickaxes, and the ornaments of the pillars destroyed nearly up to the arches." *

The beautiful edifice of Batalha, although it had never been completed by its founder, Joam I., was one of the finest specimens of gothic architecture in Europe. As the resting-place of one of the most glorious of their monarchs, the place was hallowed in the memories of the Portuguese. But its sacredness found no favour in the sight of the Prince of Essling. Its tombs were desecrated; the remains of royalty rudely torn from their grave; and the body of Joam placed through derision "in a pulpit, in the attitude of one preaching."

But a more horrible picture of the desolation which the cruelties of the French occasioned, is thus given by Dr. Southey. In parts of the narrative there seems to be more of romance than reality; but the account, in its principal details, was confirmed afterwards by the commissioners, to whom the allocation of the money which English benevolence contributed for the sufferers, had been entrusted.

"In the district of Leyria the population was cut down by the barbarities of the enemy, by famine, and by disease, from 48,000 to 16,000; and in the subdivision of Pombal from 7,000 to 1,800. Two hundred families in the town of Pombal derived before the invasion a comfortable subsistence from husbandry; after the retreat a hundred and sixty-four of those families had totally disappeared; and the few survivors of the remaining thirty-six were suffering under famine and disease. In a principal street of that poor town the commissioners found one dismantled dwelling, standing alone in the midst of ruins, and containing three wretched inhabitants. Such was the desolation which this more than barbarous enemy had left behind them, that in what had been the populous and flourishing town of Santarem, the screech owls took possession of a whole street of

* Southey.

ruins, where it seemed as if man had been employed in reducing human edifices to a state which rendered them fit receptacles for birds and beasts of prey. The number of these birds, and the boldness with which the havoc every where about inspired them, made it frightful to pass that way even in the daytime; insomuch, that a soldier who had been promoted for his personal bravery, was known more than once to forego his mess, rather than pass to it through these ruins. Dogs, who were now without owners, preyed upon the dead. Wolves fed on human bodies in the streets of Leyria; and retaining then no longer their fear of man, attacked the living who came in their way. The servant of an English gentleman was pursued one evening by two, in the outskirts of that city; he escaped from them only by climbing a single olive tree, which, happily for him, had been left standing; it was just high enough to afford him security, yet so low that the wolves besieged him in it all night; three or four others joined them in the blockade, and when he was seen and rescued in the morning, the bark, as high as they could reach, had been scored by their repeated endeavours to spring up and seize him.

“There were parts of the country where the people, having no other sustenance, allayed the pain of emptiness without supplying the wants of nature, by eating boiled grass, which they seasoned, such as could, with the brine and scales left in the baskets from which salt fish or sardinas had been sold, these being at that time the scarce and almost only remaining articles of food.”*

Meanwhile the French marshal, after destroying the bridges of Murcella and Pombeira, took a position on the Sierra de Moita, and despatched his second corps up the banks of the Alva, while marauding parties were sent out in every direction to obtain supplies. Lord Wellington, however, speedily disturbed his plans, obliging Massena to recall Reynier; and while he concentrated his whole corps on the Sierra, the English general threw a bridge over the

* Southey.

Alva, passed the light division between Porte Muncella and Pombeira, and occupied Arganil with his right wing. These movements caused immediate alarm, and obliged the Prince of Essling to decamp. Guarda was now his object; and, hurrying to Celerico with rapid strides, he was forced to secure the defiles, by lightening his march not only at the expense of a quantity of baggage and ammunition, but by the abandonment of his more distant foragers, of whom fully eight hundred were afterwards taken prisoners.

Wellington had concentrated his divisions at the Sierra de Moita on the 19th, but he was obliged to halt the columns until his supplies came up from the Mondego; and, with the exception of the cavalry and light troops continuing the pursuit, the French were undisturbed until they reached Guarda.*

It is certain that Massena had determined to hold by Portugal to the last; and after depositing his hospitals and heavy baggage in Almeida, countermarch by Sabugal to the Elga, and thus place himself in direct communication with Joseph Buonaparte and Soult. How far that plan might have succeeded can be now only a matter of conjecture; for the insubordination of his generals had arisen to a height that rendered any unity of operation an impossibility. All were at variance with each other; and all, stranger still, on the worst terms with the Prince of Essling himself. An open rupture occurred at Miranda de Corvo between Ney and Massena; and at Celerico, the former absolutely refused to obey the orders of his superior, and in place of marching towards Coria, fell back upon

* "Guarda stands upon a plain of the Sierra de Estrella (the *Mons Herminius* of the Romans) near the sources of the Zezere and the Mondego, and near the highest part of that lofty range. Its site is said to be higher than that of any other city in Europe; the ascent to it continues nearly four miles, by a road wide enough for two carts abreast, winding in numberless sinuations along the edge of a deep precipice, the sides of which are overspread with trees. The city indeed owes its origin to this commanding situation, having grown round a watch tower (called in those days *guarda*) which Sancho the First erected there in the first age of the monarchy."—*Southey*.

Almeida. For this breach of discipline Ney was deprived of his command, and the sixth corps given to Loison, a personal favourite of the commander-in-chief.

Foiled in the design of establishing himself upon the Elga, Massena determined to hold Guarda for a time, a measure which the success of Julian Sanchez, in intercepting the supplies intended for the French garrisons in Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, rendered particularly desirable. The apparent, rather than the real strength of this city, had once conferred upon it a military reputation—and General Dumouriez had termed it “the key of Portugal.” From this fine position, however, Massena was speedily dislodged by one of those masterly combinations, to which Lord Wellington was indebted for much of his success.

On the 28th, the French were driven from Frexadas; the third division secured the upper bridges of the Mondego; while the Portuguese ordenanza, under Trant and Miller, occupied the banks of the Pinhal, and cut off all communication with Almeida. “Early on the 29th, the third, sixth, and light divisions, and two regiments of light cavalry, disposed in five columns of attack on a half-circle round the foot of the Guarda mountain, ascended by as many paths, all leading upon the town of Guarda, and outflanking both the right and left of the enemy; they were supported on one wing by the militia, on the other by the fifth division, and in the centre by the first and seventh divisions.”*

The imposing steadiness which marked the advance of the allied troops, effected Lord Wellington’s object without a contest. Massena hastily retired from his position†—and had the British cavalry turned the confusion to advantage, which the beautiful movements of the infantry had created, Reynier must have been destroyed. Slade’s pur-

* Napier.

† “Their retreat was so rapid that they had not time to execute the mischief which they intended; our troops entered in time to save the cathedral, the door of which was on fire: the wood of its fine organ had been taken by the enemy for fuel, and the pipes for bullets.”—*Southey*.

suit was feeble and inefficient; and the second corps saved itself with a loss of three hundred men.

Massena took a new position on the right bank of the Coa, from which Lord Wellington determined that he should be driven. The operations which resulted were thus detailed in a despatch to Lord Liverpool from Villa Fermosa, and dated 9th April, 1811:—

“ When I last addressed your lordship the enemy occupied the Upper Coa, having his right at Rovina, and guarding the post of Rapoula de Coa with a detachment at the bridge of Ferrerias,* and his left at Sabugal, and the 8th corps was at Alfayates.

“ The right of the British army was opposite Sabugal, and the left at the bridge of Ferrerias. The militia, under General Trant and Colonel Wilson, crossed the Coa below Almeida, in order to threaten the communication of that place with Ciudad Rodrigo and the enemy’s army.

“ The river Coa is difficult of access throughout its course;† and the position which the enemy had taken was very strong, and could be approached only by its left. The troops were therefore put in motion on the morning of the 3d, to turn the enemy’s left above Sabugal, and to force the passage of the bridge and town; with the exception of the 6th division, which remained opposite the 6th corps, which was at Rovina, and one battalion of the 7th division, which observed the enemy’s detachment at the bridge of Ferrerias.

“ The 2d corps were in a strong position with their right upon a height immediately above the bridge and town of

* Below the bridge of Sequeiros.

† “ The whole of its course is through one of the most picturesque countries in Europe, and it is everywhere difficult of access. Sabugal stands on the right bank. This town was founded about the year 1220, by Alonso X. of Leon, who named it from the number of elder-trees (*sabugos*) growing about it: the place is now remarkable for some of the largest chestnut trees that are anywhere to be seen. It was afterwards annexed to the Portuguese dominions, and its old castle still remains a monument of King Diniz, whose magnificent works are found over the whole kingdom.”

Sabugal, and their left extending along the road to Alfayates, to a height which commanded all the approaches to Sabugal from the fords of the Coa above the town. The second corps communicated by Rendo with the sixth corps at Rovina. It was intended to turn the left of this corps; and with this view the light division and the cavalry, under Major-General Sir William Erskine, and Major-General Slade, were to cross the Coa by two separate fords upon the right, the cavalry upon the right of the light division; the third division, under Major-General Picton, at a ford on their left, about a mile above Sabugal; and the fifth division, under Major-General Dunlop, and the artillery, at the bridge of Sabugal.

“ Colonel Beckwith’s brigade of the light division was the first that crossed the Coa, with two squadrons of cavalry upon their right. Four companies of the 95th, and three companies of Colonel Elder’s caçadores, drove in the enemy’s piquets, and were supported by the 43d regiment.

“ At this moment a rain storm came on, which rendered it impossible to see any thing; and these troops having pushed on in pursuit of the enemy’s piquets, came upon the left of their main body, which it had been intended they should turn. The light troops were driven back upon the 43d regiment; and, as soon as the atmosphere became clear, the enemy, having perceived that the body which had advanced were not strong, attacked them in a solid column, supported by cavalry and artillery. These troops repulsed this attack, and advanced in pursuit upon the enemy’s position, where they were attacked by a fresh column on the left, and were charged by the hussars on their right. They retired, and took post behind a wall, from which post they again repulsed the enemy, and advanced a second time in pursuit of them, and took from them a howitzer. They were however again attacked by a fresh column, with cavalry, and retired again to their post, where they were joined by the other brigade of the light division, consisting of the two battalions of the 52d, and the 1st caçadores. These

troops repulsed the enemy ; and Colonel Beckwith's brigade and the 1st battalion of the 52d again advanced upon them. They were attacked again by a fresh column, supported by cavalry, which charged their right, and they took post in an enclosure upon the top of a height, from whence they could protect the howitzer which the 43d had taken ; and they drove back the enemy.

“ The enemy were making arrangements to attack them again in this post, and had moved a column on their left, when the light infantry of Major-General Picton's division, under Lieutenant-Colonel Williams, supported by Major-General the Hon. C. Colville's brigade, opened their fire upon them.

“ At the same moment the head of Major-General Dunlop's column crossed the bridge of the Coa, and ascended the heights on the right flank of the enemy, and the cavalry appeared on the high ground in rear of the enemy's left : the enemy then retired across the hills towards Rendo, leaving the howitzer in the possession of those who had so gallantly gained and preserved it, and about 200 killed on the ground, 6 officers, and 300 prisoners in our hands.

“ Although the operations of this day were, by unavoidable accidents, not performed in the manner in which I intended they should be, I consider the action that was fought by the light division, by Colonel Beckwith's brigade principally, with the whole of the second corps, to be one of the most glorious that British troops were ever engaged in.

“ The 43d regiment, under Major Patrickson, particularly distinguished themselves ; as did that part of the 95th regiment, in Colonel Beckwith's brigade, under the command of Major Gilmour, and Colonel Elder's caçadores. The first battalion of the 52d regiment, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Ross, likewise showed great steadiness and gallantry when they joined Colonel Beckwith's brigade.

“ Throughout the action the troops received great advantage from the assistance of two guns of Captain Bull's troop

of horse artillery, which crossed at the ford with the light division, and came up to their support.

“ It was impossible for any officer to conduct himself with more ability and gallantry than Colonel Beckwith.

“ The action was commenced by an unavoidable accident, to which all operations are liable ; but having been commenced, it would have been impossible to withdraw from the ground without risking the loss of the object of our movements ; and it was desirable to obtain possession, if possible, of the top of the hill, from which the enemy had made so many attacks with advantage on the first position taken by the 43d regiment. This was gained before the third division came up.

“ I had also great reason to be satisfied with the conduct of Colonel Drummond, who commands the other brigade in the light division.

“ When the firing commenced, the 6th corps broke up from their position at Rovina, and marched towards Rendo. The two corps joined at that place, and continued their retreat to Alfayates, followed by our cavalry, part of which was that night at Soito.

“ The enemy continued their retreat that night and the next morning, and entered the Spanish frontier on the 4th. They have since continued their retreat ; and yesterday the last of them crossed the Agueda.

“ I have the honour to enclose the returns of killed and wounded from the 18th March. I am concerned to have to report that Lieut.-Colonel Waters was taken prisoner on the 3d, before the action commenced.* He had crossed the

* Colonel Waters was a man who united great intelligence with singular intrepidity, and many of his adventures were romantic in the extreme. When captured, he declined to give his parole ; and from a friendly Spaniard at Ciudad Rodrigo, obtained a pair of spurs with sharpened rowels. On the journey to Salamanca, ascertaining that the chief of the *gens d'armes* was the best mounted of the party, when the man had occasion to alight and alter the position of his saddle, Waters dashed the rowels in his own horse, and left his escort with scanty ceremony. Although the plain behind him was for miles crowded with French regiments on the march, of whom many fired at him as he passed, while more cheered the bold adventurer, he distanced his pursuers,

Coa to reconnoitre the enemy's position, as had been frequently his practice, without having with him any escort; and he was surrounded by some hussars, and taken. He had rendered very important services upon many occasions in the last two years, and his loss is sensibly felt.

"I sent six squadrons of cavalry, under Sir William Erskine, on the 7th, towards Almeida, to reconnoitre that place, and drive in any parties which might be in that neighbourhood, and to cut off the communication between the garrison and the army. He found a division of the 9th corps at Junça, which he drove before him across the Turon and Dos Casas; and he took from them many prisoners. Captain Bull's troop of horse artillery did great execution upon this occasion. The enemy withdrew in the night across the Agueda.

"The allied army have taken up the position upon the Dos Casas which Brig.-General Craufurd occupied with his advanced guard in the latter part of the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, having our advanced posts at Gallegos and upon the Agueda. The militia are at Cinco Villas and Malpartida.

"The enemy have no communication with the garrison of Almeida, from whence they have lately withdrawn the heavy artillery employed in the summer in the siege of that place.

"My last report from Cadiz is dated the 13th of March.

"I have not heard from Sir William Beresford since the 1st instant. At that time he hoped to be able to blockade Badajoz on the 3d.

"I learn by letters of the 3d March, received this day from the south of Portugal, that after General Zayas had landed his corps at Huelva and Moguer, the Prince d'Aremberg moved upon Moguer from Seville, with 3,000 infantry and 800 cavalry, upon which the Spanish troops embarked

gained a thick wood, and on the third day rejoined Lord Wellington at head quarters, who was so thoroughly convinced he would escape, that he had carried the Colonel's baggage with his own, observing, "that Waters would not remain long an encumbrance upon Reynier."

again. It is stated that the cavalry had lost some of their equipments.

“ I have no accounts of a late date from the north of Spain.*

Had not the British light troops already signalized themselves during the retreat, the conduct of these splendid battalions at Sabugal alone, was sufficient to immortalize the division. Hurried prematurely into action through the rashness of their commanding officer—embarrassed by mist and rain, which prevented them from perceiving danger, until the skirmishers and 43d were involved in a contest with the whole of Reynier’s corps, and that, too, when not a division of the English army had reached its appointed battle-ground—in this desperate situation, the beautiful discipline and chivalrous courage of these gallant soldiers kept the multitude of their assailants in check, until the 52d arrived to their assistance. A brilliant charge cleared the heights; the French were forced back, and a howitzer was captured. The advance of the light regiments however, was arrested by the enemy’s cavalry—and the skirmishers quickly driven back upon the battalion companies of the 43d, which had sheltered themselves behind a

* Return of killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of Lieut.-General Lord Viscount Wellington, K.B., in the several affairs with the French army from the 16th of March to the 7th of April, 1811, inclusive.

“ Head Quarters, Villar Mayor, 8th April, 1811.

	Officers.	Non-comd. Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-Commission- ed Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	3	1	16	8	20
Wounded	11	11	128	11	147
Missing	1	—	4	1	5
Total	15	9	148	20	172

stone enclosure. The French horsemen swarmed in squadrons over the hill; and some, more daring than the rest, surmounted the ascent, and, "with incredible desperation, riding up to the wall, were in the act of firing over it with their pistols, when a rolling volley laid nearly the whole of them lifeless on the ground. By this time, however, a second and stronger column of infantry had rushed up the face of the hill, endeavouring to break in and retake the howitzer, which was on the edge of the descent and only fifty yards from the wall; but no man could reach it and live, so deadly was the 43d's fire."*

To the gallantry of the troops Lord Wellington bore ample testimony; and not only in his official details, but also in his private correspondence, he alludes with manifest satisfaction to the noble conduct of his light troops.

"We have given," he says, "the French a handsome dressing, and I think they will not say again that we are not a manœuvring army. We may not manœuvre so beautifully as they do; but I do not desire better sport than to meet one of their columns *en masse* with our lines. The poor 2d corps received a terrible beating from the 43d and 52d on the 3d."†

After his defeat, Reynier fell back on Rendo. The French loss was exceedingly heavy—as the minimum has been laid at 1,000, while others raise it to one-half more. This trial of strength seemed to have decided Massena upon abandoning Portugal altogether. On the 4th his march was rapidly directed on Ciudad Rodrigo; and on the 5th, the French rear guard crossed the frontier, and left the land they had invaded without an enemy!

The discomfiture of the army of Portugal was in every way decisive; and Massena's campaign conveyed two useful lessons. Regarding the qualities of the British army, the continental belief was very general, that with much active courage and matchless endurance, they had neither talents

* Napier.

† Letter to Capt. Chapman, R.E., 5th April, 1811.

for manœuvring, nor, had they possessed them, were their generals sufficient tacticians to turn them to account. This error, by Lord Wellington's recent operations, was removed. When he acted on the defensive, at every place where he awaited an attack, his positions were so ably chosen, that the French were always obliged to fight at disadvantage. When it was his interest to advance, half the objects at which he aimed were effected by previous combinations, and sometimes without losing a man. Another military delusion was exposed by the events of this campaign, namely, the irresistible effect of the French attack *en masse*. A quarter of a century had established this opinion; and the revolutionary victories acquired by movements in heavy columns, had been confirmed by the overthrow of those European powers with whom Napoleon had been more recently engaged. No wonder, therefore, that against the unpractised soldiery of Britain, they had been employed in the fullest assurance of success. But with English battalions opposed to it, the *colonne serrée* proved unavailing; and against the steady array of even a two-rank line, these perpendicular attacks of Massena ended invariably in discomfiture.

The head of a column, no matter how steadily it advances, must soon be shattered by the converging fire of the enemy who receives it in line. To be effectively employed, a close column should, wedge-like, drive itself through the obstacles opposed, reserving its fire until it gained the flank or central intersection it was launched against, and when it had consequently, sufficient space to deploy. Anything short of breaking a line, or forcing itself between the intermitted spaces of a formation, must be considered as a failure in the attack. To the fire of an enemy in line, a column cannot presume to reply—a front of thirty muskets will be overwhelmed by the fire of three hundred; and with every shot radiating from its head to its centre, of necessity the leading files of the column are shot down, and the movement of the mass arrested.

“The natural repugnance of men to trample on their own dead and wounded, the cries and groans of the latter, and the whistling of the cannon-shots as they tear open the ranks, produce the greatest disorder, especially in the centre of attacking columns, which, blinded by smoke, unstedfast of footing, and bewildered by words of command coming from a multitude of officers crowded together, can neither see what is taking place, nor make any effort to advance or retreat without increasing the confusion: no example of courage can be useful, no moral effect can be produced by the spirit of individuals, except upon the head, which is often firm, and even victorious at the moment when the rear is flying in terror.”*

Notwithstanding these evident disadvantages, to this their favourite method of attack the French adhered tenaciously to the last moment of the war, although the trial of heavy columns against lines was repeatedly made, and always proved unsuccessful. It is an interesting coincidence, that the regiment† which, with the others of its division, proved the inefficiency of the *colonne serrée* at Sabugal, by the bloody repulses it inflicted upon Massena's 2d corps, confirmed it at Waterloo by the annihilation of a division of Napoleon's reserve; and thus produced, as has been asserted, the crisis of that battle, which immortalized the name of Wellington, and achieved the deliverance of Europe!

* Napier.

† The 52d.

CHAPTER XIX.

IMMENSE LOSSES SUSTAINED BY MASSENA—HE RETIRES TO SALAMANCA—ALMEIDA INVESTED—AFFAIR OF CAMPO MAYOR—LORD WELLINGTON'S PROCLAMATION TO THE PORTUGUESE—APATHY OF THE REGENCY—LETTER TO MR. STUART—OPERATIONS OF MARSHAL BERESFORD—HE CROSSES THE GUADIANA—LOSS OF A SQUADRON OF THE BRITISH LIGHT DRAGOONS—THE FRENCH RETIRE FROM ESTREMADURA—LORD WELLINGTON ARRIVES AT ELVAS—RECONNAISSANCE ON BADAJOZ—ARRANGEMENTS MADE WITH THE SPANISH GENERALS—LORD WELLINGTON RETURNS TO THE AGUEDA—HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO MARSHAL BERESFORD—MASSENA IS REINFORCED AND ADVANCES TO RELIEVE ALMEIDA—AND WELLINGTON DETERMINES TO PREVENT IT—POSITION TAKEN BY THE ALLIED GENERAL.

WHEN Massena reached the Agueda, his army did not exceed 35,000 effective men. He invaded Portugal with 65,000—at Santarem, Count d'Erlon joined him with 10,000 more; and 9,000 reinforced him during his retreat; consequently, the losses sustained during the campaign amounted in round numbers to 40,000 men, of whom at least two-thirds were veteran soldiers.*

Although the junction of convalescents and detachments in a few days increased the strength of his *corps d'armée* to 40,000 troops of all arms, Massena did not consider himself in a state that warranted him in recommencing active operations. His troops required a season for repose,—they had been not only numerically, but physically reduced,—their energies exhausted by fatigue, and their spirit broken by a constant succession of defeats. These considerations determined the Prince of Essling to avoid

* "The army of Portugal, grievously weakened by the losses of its long and disastrous retreat, could hardly, on re-entering Spain, muster 35,000 combatants. The cavalry had only 2,000 men in a condition to march; the artillery could only muster up twelve pieces."—*Belmas' Journal du Sièges.*

hostilities for the present, and accordingly, he retired to Salamanca. In consequence of this movement of the French Marshal, Lord Wellington, cantoning his army between the Coa and Agueda, invested Almeida — while Beresford, with a corps increased by the fourth division and a brigade of heavy cavalry to 22,000 men, was detached to relieve Campo Mayor, and commence the siege of Badajoz.

The former place surrendered on the 21st, when Beresford had reached Chamusca, and his advanced guards were only two marches distant from the fortress. The very gallant defence made by a Portuguese officer, named Tallia, who, with a garrison of not two hundred men, five guns mounted on his works, and the sap pushed forward to the crest of the glacis, resisted with an open breach, and repulsing one assault, surrendered on most honourable terms, and that only when the enemy were forming their storming parties for a second effort, formed a noble contrast to the base treachery of the worthless Governor of Badajoz; and it was a subject of regret to all, that one who defended a weak fortress so bravely, could not have held out a little longer, and received the succour he so well deserved.

Although apprized of the fall of Campo Mayor, Marshal Beresford thought that he might surprise the besiegers; and with this intention he marched rapidly towards the place; and on the morning of the 25th the British advanced guard found itself in presence of the enemy. The French, commanded by Latour Maubourg, were filing out of Campo Mayor in some confusion, their force comprising three battalions of infantry, twelve hundred cavalry, a troop of horse artillery, and the siege train of thirteen heavy guns. Instant orders were issued for an attack. "Colborne marched with the infantry on the right—Head, with the 13th light dragoons and two squadrons of Portuguese on the left—and the heavy cavalry formed a reserve. Perceiving that their battering train was endangered, the French cavalry, as the ground over which they were retiring was favourable

for the movement, charged the 13th. But they were vigorously repulsed; and, failing in breaking the British, the whole, consisting of four regiments, drew up in front, forming an imposing line. The 13th instantly formed and galloped forward—and nothing could have been more splendid than their charge. They rode fairly through the French, overtook and cut down many of the gunners, and at last entirely headed the line of march, keeping up a fierce and straggling encounter with the broken horsemen of the enemy, until some of the English dragoons actually reached the gates of Badajoz, where many of them were captured.”*

But from the disorderly manner with which the pursuit was carried on, the more solid advantages were lost, which a steadier and more systematic attack might have probably secured. A considerable loss was also a consequence of this rash and ill-directed gallantry; for, besides seventy prisoners, the allies had one hundred men killed or wounded; the French losing thrice that number, and a howitzer. The affair of Campo Mayor gave serious displeasure to Lord Wellington; and the light cavalry were in consequence reprimanded:† but all bore testimony to their

* Victories of the British Armies.

† “I wish you would call together the officers of the dragoons, and point out to them the mischiefs which must result from the disorder of the troops in action. The undisciplined ardour of the 13th dragoons, and 1st regiment of Portuguese cavalry, is not of the description of the determined bravery and steadiness of soldiers confident in their discipline and in their officers. Their conduct was that of a rabble, galloping as fast as their horses could carry them over a plain, after an enemy to whom they could do no mischief when they were broken, and the pursuit had continued for a limited distance; and sacrificing substantial advantages, and all the objects of your operation, by their want of discipline. To this description of their conduct I add my entire conviction, that if the enemy could have thrown out of Badajoz only one hundred men regularly formed, they would have driven back these two regiments in equal haste and disorder, and would probably have taken many whose horses would have been knocked up. If the 13th dragoons are again guilty of this conduct I shall take their horses from them, and send the officers and men to do duty at Lisbon.”—Dated “*Celerico, 30th March, 1811.*”

valour, "and the unsparing admiration of the whole army consoled them."*

"In this affair, there were many opportunities for the display of individual courage and dexterity. Colonel Chamorin, of the 26th French dragoons, was encountered by a corporal of the 13th, whose comrade he had just before shot through the head: each was a master of his horse and weapon; but at length the corporal, striking off the helmet of his enemy with one blow, cleft his head down to the ears with another."†

The great object was now effected on which the Portuguese government had attached so much importance, and based so many of their complaints. Their country was no longer the seat of war; and no Frenchman, save a prisoner, was left within the frontier of the kingdom. Lord Wellington seized this as a fit occasion to enforce upon the Portuguese people the necessity of national exertion; and on the 10th of April he issued the annexed

" PROCLAMATION.

"The Portuguese nation are informed, that the cruel enemy who had invaded Portugal, and had devastated their country, have been obliged to evacuate it, after suffering great losses, and have retired across the Agueda. The inhabitants of the country are therefore at liberty to return to their occupations.

"The Marshal General refers them to the Proclamation which he addressed to them in August last, a copy of which will accompany this Proclamation.

"The Portuguese nation now know by experience that the Marshal General was not mistaken either in the

* "It was a subject of regret that this dashing exploit of the light cavalry did not receive the support it merited: had the heavy dragoons been vigorously pushed forward, the detachment and their guns must have been necessarily cut off."—*Victories of the British Armies*.

† Southey.

nature or the amount of the evil with which they were threatened, or respecting the only remedies to avoid it, viz. decided and determined resistance, or removal and the concealment of all property, and every thing which could tend to the subsistence of the enemy, or to facilitate his progress.

“ Nearly four years have now elapsed since the tyrant of Europe invaded Portugal with a powerful army. The cause of this invasion was not self-defence; it was not to seek revenge for insults offered or injuries done by the benevolent sovereign of this kingdom; it was not even the ambitious desire of augmenting his own political power, as the Portuguese government had, without resistance, yielded to all the demands of the tyrant; but the object was the insatiable desire of plunder, the wish to disturb the tranquillity, and to enjoy the riches of a people who had passed nearly half a century in peace.

“ The same desire occasioned the invasion of the northern provinces of Portugal in 1809, and the same want of plunder the invasion of 1810, now happily defeated; and the Marshal General appeals to the experience of those who have been witnesses of the conduct of the French army during these three invasions, whether confiscation, plunder, and outrage, are not the sole objects of their attention, from the general down to the soldier.

“ Those countries which have submitted to the tyranny have not been better treated than those which have resisted. The inhabitants have lost all their possessions, their families have been dishonoured, their laws overturned, their religion destroyed, and, above all, they have deprived themselves of the honour of that manly resistance to the oppressor, of which the people of Portugal have given so signal and so successful an example.

“ The Marshal General, however, considers it his duty, in announcing the intelligence of the result of the last invasion, to warn the people of Portugal, that, although the danger is removed, it is not entirely gone by. They have

something to lose, and the tyrant will endeavour to plunder them; they are happy under the mild government of a beneficent sovereign, and he will endeavour to destroy their happiness; they have successfully resisted him, and he will endeavour to force them to submit to his iron yoke. They should be unremitting in their preparations for decided and steady resistance; those capable of bearing arms should learn the use of them; or those whose age or sex renders them unfit to bear arms, should fix upon places of security and concealment, and should make all the arrangements for their easy removal to them when the moment of danger shall approach. Valuable property, which tempts the avarice of the tyrant and his followers, and is the great object of their invasion, should be carefully buried beforehand, each individual concealing his own, and thus not trusting to the weakness of others to keep a secret in which they may not be interested.

“ Measures should be taken to conceal or destroy provisions which cannot be removed, and everything which can tend to facilitate the enemy's progress; for this may be depended upon, that the enemy's troops seize upon everything, and leave nothing for the owner.

“ By these measures, whatever may be the superiority of numbers with which the desire of plunder and of revenge may induce, and his power may enable, the tyrant again to invade this country, the result will be certain; and the independence of Portugal, and the happiness of its inhabitants, will be finally established to their eternal honour.”

The conduct of the regency in the administration of public affairs had undergone no favourable change. The same apathy—the same indifference to coming events, was observable in every department. With a grand and extended plan of operations in contemplation, the allied general found his Portuguese resources every day becoming fewer and less efficient. The militia had been already

disbanded; the regular army awfully reduced;* and the government, when apprized of the diminution in their regiments, received Lord Wellington's remonstrances with impatience; or, as more frequently occurred, with total disregard. Measures had been frequently and emphatically recommended for their adoption; but, with the existence of monarchy at stake, the retention of mob popularity seemed to influence the regency far more than the salvation of the country. Lord Wellington had frequent cause to complain of their indifference during the past year; and it would appear never with greater reason, than at this period of the war. In writing to Mr. Stuart, the following forcible observations occur in speaking of the regency:—

“ They have recently adopted some of the measures recommended to them to provide an increase of revenue; but I would beg to know why those measures were not adopted in November, 1809, when I apprized them of the approaching crisis, and recommended to them to provide for their finances. Why were they not adopted when ordered by his royal highness the Prince Regent? Why not adopted when repeatedly recommended by yourself and by me?

“ If they had been so adopted, the world would have been convinced that Portugal was straining every nerve in the contest; and the assistance of Great Britain would have been given with increased alacrity to a country whose

* “ I beg you to mention to Dom Miguel Forjaz, that of a gross force which ought to be 18,572 infantry, which are with this part of the army, there are only 11,586 under arms, and 5,800 sick; that is to say, not two-thirds of the numbers doing duty, and nearly one-third of the numbers sick.

“ Only conceive the expense of every man produced in the field for service

“ P.S. However, since writing the other side, I have heard that Colonel Ashworth's brigade of Portuguese infantry are as badly off as General Pack's; they have nothing to eat, and have sent here for it, having before sent to Coimbra and Figueira, where they found nothing!! So much for rice, *bacalao*, and sardinias!—W.”—*Wellington Despatches.*

government was making wise arrangements and great exertions in its own cause.

* * * * *

“I recommend to them to advert seriously to the nature of the task which they have to perform. Popularity, however desirable it may be to individuals, will not form, or feed, or pay an army; will not enable it to march and fight; will not keep it in a state of efficiency for long and arduous services. The resources which a wise government must find for these objects must be drawn from the people, not by measures which will render those popular who undertake to govern a country in critical circumstances, but by measures which must for a moment have the contrary effect.

“The enthusiasm of the people in favour of any individual never saved any country. They must be obliged, by the restraint of law and regulation, to do those things, and to pay those contributions, which are to enable the government to carry on this necessary contest.”

Having obtained possession of Campo Mayor, Marshal Beresford cantoned his troops in Elvas and the villages in its vicinity. The army required rest,—their recent duties had been severe,—and the fourth division in particular, had suffered much from fatigue, a scarcity of shoes having obliged them to march barefooted. At Elvas the marshal had been assured by the Portuguese authorities that he should find the necessary *matériel* for throwing a bridge across the Guadiana—a preliminary step towards the investment of Badajoz. But the amount of the means for effecting this work was found to be miserably insufficient. Instead of twenty large boats, which it was alleged had been brought from Badajoz before the siege, but five were found; and the pontoons sent up from Lisbon were so small, that they neither were calculated to withstand the rapidity of the current, nor bear the weight of artillery. By this delay, General Philippon, the Governor of Badajoz, was enabled to restore the defences and fill in the trenches; while Latour

Maubourg, who had succeeded Mortier in the command, with his accustomed activity spread his foragers over the country in all directions, and thus obtained a sufficiency of provisions to enable the fortress to withstand a siege.

“ Captain Squires, of the engineers, however, undertook to bridge the Guadiana under Jerumenha, by fixing trestle-piers on each side in the shallows, and connecting them with the five Spanish boats; wherefore, a squadron of cavalry was secretly passed over by a ford, to protect the workmen from surprise. The 3d of April, the bridge being finished, the troops assembled during the night in the woods near Jerumenha, being to cross at daylight; but the river suddenly swelling, swept away the trestles, rendered the ford impassable, and stopped the operations. No more materials could be immediately procured, and the Spanish boats were converted into flying bridges for the cavalry and artillery, while Squires constructed a slight narrow bridge for infantry with the pontoons and with casks taken from the neighbouring villages. To cover this operation a battalion was added to the squadron already on the left bank, and the army commenced passing the 5th of April; but it was late in the night of the 6th, ere the whole had crossed and taken up their position, which was on a strong range of hills, covered by a swampy rivulet.”*

It is hard to reconcile with the usual energy of Latour Maubourg, the singular indifference he showed to the crossing of the Guadiana by the allies. It was not until the 7th that he advanced with a corps of 3,000 infantry and 500 dragoons; and though too late to interrupt the passage of the river, he unfortunately succeeded in carrying off a squadron of the 13th light dragoons. Under cover of the darkness, the enemy had eluded the vigilance of the Portuguese videttes, and the surprise was complete. They had even reached the village undiscovered, where head quarters were established; but being fired upon by a sergeant's

* Napier.

guard, they rode off rapidly without effecting anything beyond a momentary alarm.

Marshal Beresford, leaving the 4th division to reduce Olivenca, which surrendered on the 15th, advanced to Zafra with the remainder of his army. His object was to oblige Latour Maubourg to retire from Estremadura, and thus secure his operations against Badajoz from the interruption, which the vicinity of a French corps might be expected to occasion. During this movement, a cavalry affair highly creditable to the English dragoons, occurred. Two French regiments—the 2d and 10th hussars, advancing on a marauding expedition towards Llerena, had reached Usagre, where they were encountered by the British cavalry. The 13th light dragoons charged them most gallantly, broke and pursued them for six miles, and killed, wounded, or made prisoners fully 300 men. The affair was very brilliant; and it was, in a military point of view, most valuable, for on the British side not a man was lost.

On the 16th, Marshal Beresford was rejoined by the 4th division from Olivenca; and the concentration of the allied army at Zafra was followed by the retreat of Latour Maubourg, who retired to Guadalcanal on the 18th, leaving Estremadura and its resources at the disposal of his opponent. At this time a brigade of German light infantry reached Olivenca from Lisbon—and on the 21st, Lord Wellington himself arrived at Elvas from the north; and there Marshal Beresford joined him.

On the following day, a formal *reconnaissance* was made on Badajoz. With the Germans and cavalry division of Madden, Lord Wellington forded the Guadiana, and approached close to the fortress. The accidental arrival of a convoy, under protection of infantry and cavalry, induced the escort of Lord Wellington to attempt to cut it off, and obliged Philippon to make a sortie to protect its entrance. A smart affair ensued that caused the allies the loss of 100 men, and enabled the convoy to reach its destination.

Every thing led Lord Wellington to conclude, that Soult

would not permit Badajoz to fall, without making a vigorous effort to save it. Hence, before the place was invested, it was indispensable to secure the cooperation of the Spanish armies, and combine their operations with those of Beresford. In consequence, the allied general proposed that Blake should move from Ayamonte, and take post at Xeres de los Cavalleros; Ballasteros occupy Barquillo on his left; while the cavalry of the fifth army stationed at Llerena, should observe the road of Guadalcanal, and communicate through Zafra, by the right, with Ballasteros, and thus watch the passes of the Morena. Castaños was required to furnish three battalions for the siege, keeping the rest of the corps at Merida, to support the Spanish cavalry. It was further stipulated, that the British army should be in second line, and, in the event of a battle, Albuera, centrically situated with respect to the roads leading from Andalusia to Badajoz, should be the point of concentration for all the allied forces.

Meanwhile, as if the former delinquencies of both governments had not been sufficiently embarrassing, the excesses of Mendizabal in Portugal, on one side, and the ill-advised design of the Regency to reclaim the possession of Olivenca from the Spaniards on the other, had done all but produce a rupture between both kingdoms. Fortunately, by British agency this ruinous calamity was averted; but it delayed the replies of both Castaños and Blake, respecting the proposed operations against Badajoz. While waiting their decision, intelligence arrived that Massena was about to take the field. Napoleon's orders to that effect were imperative; and Wellington hurried back to the Agueda, leaving with his Lieutenant the following instructions, by which he was in every case to be directed.

"Elvas, 23d April, 1811.

" Marshal Beresford will receive with this memorandum the copy of one drawn for his use, and that of the chief engineer, and commanding officer of artillery.

“During the siege of Badajoz his object will be to place his troops in such situations as that they will be best able to carry on the operations, and to join, in case the enemy should attempt to relieve the place.

“If the enemy should make the attempt, Marshal Beresford will consider of, and decide upon, the chance of success, according to a view of the relative numbers of both armies, and making a reasonable allowance for the number of Spanish troops which shall cooperate with him in any attack which the enemy may make upon him. If he should think the enemy too strong for him, with the assistance which he will know that he will have from the Spanish troops, he will retire across the Guadiana, and thence, if necessary, towards Portalegre, taking the position of the Caya and Portalegre, successively.

“If Sir William Beresford should think his strength sufficient to fight a general action, to save the siege of Badajoz, he will collect his troops to fight it.

“I believe that, upon the whole, the most central and advantageous place to collect his troops will be at Albuera. If the enemy should attempt to turn his left, in order to march upon Badajoz by Talavera, he has his choice between attacking them in that operation, or marching by his own left, along the Talavera rivulet. If they attempt to turn his right, he has the same choice, or to march by his right upon Valverde, and place his right upon the Valverde rivulet.

“All this must of course be left to the decision of Sir William Beresford. I authorize him to fight the action if he should think proper, or to retire if he should not.

“If the enemy should advance, different measures must be adopted in respect to the operations of the siege, according to the state in which they will be when the enemy shall make the attempt to relieve the place, and according to Sir William Beresford’s intentions of fighting the battle, or not.”

It was a subject of general surprise how quickly the French army restored its organization during its brief rest at Salamanca; and nothing could have proved more forcibly what immense advantages in warfare are derived from military experience. As the orders of the Emperor were so peremptory, every facility had certainly been given to his lieutenant that could enable him to carry them into effect. Bessieres reinforced the Prince of Essling with 1,000 cavalry, and a battery of guns from the imperial guard—troops were drafted for a similar purpose from Leon and Castile; while Joseph Buonaparte's visit to Paris rendered disposable a large proportion of the corps hitherto retained at Madrid for the personal protection of the king, and these, also, were promptly moved forward to the Agueda. Massena's *corps d'armée* was thus increased to 46,000 effective men, of whom 5,000 were cavalry—and with this imposing force he immediately broke up from the Tormes, announcing, in a general order to "the army of Portugal," that the relief of Almeida was the first object to be achieved.

It was a manifesto, however, far better calculated to bring to memory their late disasters, than give any reasonable assurance of an approaching victory. To describe a country from which they had been so recently and ingloriously expelled, as "a scene of triumphs," and even to name "the lines of Lisbon," was to recall a period of want and misery, sickness and privations, all sustained without a single advantage, and terminated by a ruinous retreat.

When Lord Wellington arrived at Villa Fermosa on the 28th of April, he found that the French army were concentrating fast at Ciudad Rodrigo, where Massena had been stationary since the 25th. The object of the Marshal was no secret; and his superiority in point of strength had been clearly ascertained. For Lord Wellington there was no alternative—and he must either permit Almeida to be relieved, or risk a battle. Upon the latter he decided; and with 32,000 infantry, 1,500 cavalry, and 42 guns, he united

his detached corps, and took a position that covered the blockaded fortress.

“The country between the Agueda and the Coa is a high open tract, which falls in a gradual slope from the mountains on the south in which those rivers have their sources, to the Douro: here and there are woods of cork and ilex, and the whole tract is intersected and divided into ridges by streams which run parallel to the larger rivers during the greater part of their course, and fall most of them into the Agueda. An army advancing into Portugal might, by moving upon the ridge of Fuentes Guinaldo, turn the right of all the positions that can be taken upon these smaller streams; or if it advanced in a direct line, the parallel ridges and woods covering any movement without interrupting it, would favour it in manœuvring and directing its principal strength against either flank. The allies were cantoned along the Duas Casas, and toward the sources of the Azava; the light division being at Gallegos and Espeja, upon the latter. But the ridge between the Duas Casas and the Turon offered the most advantageous position, because on the left it was of difficult access in front, and on the right it connected with the high country about Naved’Aver, from whence the communications were easy in the direction of Alfayates and Sabugal.”*

The allied battle position was on a table-land—the centre in front of Alameda, the left flank resting on Fort Conception, and the right in the village of Fuentes d’Oñoro,—and it had this advantage, that “the French general could not, with any prudence, venture to march, by his own right, against Almeida, lest the allies, crossing the ravine at the villages of Alameda and Fuentes d’Oñoro, should fall on his flank, and drive him into the Agueda. Hence, to cover the blockade, which was maintained by Pack’s brigade and an English regiment, it was sufficient to leave the 5th division near Fort Conception, and the 6th division opposite Alameda. The 1st and 3d were then concentrated on a

* Southey.

gentle rise, about a cannon-shot behind Fuentes d'Oñoro, where the steppe of land which the army occupied turned back, and ended on the Turon, becoming rocky and difficult as it approached that river.”*

With these dispositions, Wellington awaited the attack of a superior enemy,—and in the conflict which ensued, while his own military qualities were powerfully developed, the fortunes of a doubtful day were decided by the gallantry and discipline of that noble soldiery, on whom their general ventured to stake the reputation of a life,—and the result proved that his confidence had been worthily reposed.

* Napier.



CHAPTER XX.

MASSENA CROSSES THE AZAVA—FUENTES D'ONORO—DESPATCH TO LORD LIVERPOOL—DETAILS OF THE ACTION—EXPLOIT OF THE HORSE ARTILLERY—DANGEROUS POSITION OF THE ALLIES—LORD WELLINGTON RETIRES HIS RIGHT AND CENTRE—THE MANŒUVRE BEAUTIFULLY EXECUTED—RENEWED ATTACK UPON FUENTES D'ONORO—DESPERATE CONTEST FOR THE POSSESSION OF THE VILLAGE—SPLENDID BAYONET CHARGE—FRENCH LOSS—EVENING ENDS THE CONFLICT—MASSENA DECLINES TO RENEW THE CONTEST, AND RETREATS TO CIUDAD RODRIGO—OBSERVATIONS ON THE BATTLE.

THE height of the Azava had made it a hazardous operation to cross the fords; and Massena, pushing his pickets up to the line from Espeja to Marialva which was held by the light division, waited until the waters should subside and permit an easier passage. On the 2d of May the river had fallen considerably; and early on that day, the whole of the enemy's '*corps d'armée*' were discovered moving from Ciudad Rodrigo. Their passage over the Azava was undisputed—for, after a slight cavalry affair at Gallegos, Craufurd leisurely retired, and crossing the Dos Casas, occupied the hamlet of Fuentes d'Oñoro.

This lovely village had been alternately possessed by the allies and the enemy; and, by a very singular good fortune, it had been hitherto respected by both. It stands in a valley on the left bank of the Dos Casas, with rising grounds on either side. The road to Ciudad Rodrigo passes through the hamlet, and a morass extends on that side, until it is bounded by a thick wood; while, on the other, the ground undulates considerably, and the surface is rocky and uneven. There were many stone enclosures

in Fuentes, which would yield good protection to the infantry that might be engaged in its defence; and the heights behind afforded a rallying point for troops if forced from the lower village, and also a means of feeding them with reinforcements from the divisions posted in their rear. The upper part of the village stands upon the edge of a ravine which rises boldly from the channel of the Dos Casas; and the old chapel and a few houses which crowned the height, were, from a situation of difficult approach, particularly defensible.

Upon this sweet village, the first and final efforts of the enemy were made. Moving towards the river, the 2d and 8th corps, in two columns, approached Alameda and Fort Concepcion; while a third, comprising the whole cavalry, the 6th, and part of the 9th corps, advanced against Fuentes d'Oñoro.*

The detail of the glorious contest which ensued was communicated to Lord Liverpool, in a despatch addressed to the Secretary of State by Lord Wellington, and dated Fermosa, 8th May, 1811. After noticing the operations we have already described, his lordship thus continues:—

“Shortly after the enemy had formed on the ground on the right of the Dos Casas, on the afternoon of the 3d, they attacked with a large force the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro, which was defended in a most gallant manner by Lieut.-Colonel Williams, of the 5th battalion 60th

* On this occasion Fuentes d'Oñoro shared the fate of most of the peninsular towns, in whose immediate vicinity a battle was decided. However culpable the conduct of the few might be, the subsequent reparation made by the British army, showed how deep was their generous sympathy for the sufferings of their quondam acquaintances. Colonel Napier says:—“Every family in it was well known to the light division; it was therefore a subject of deep regret to find that the preceding troops had pillaged it, leaving only the shells of houses where, three days before, a friendly population had been living in comfort. This wanton act was so warmly felt by the whole army, that 8,000 dollars were afterwards collected by general subscription for the poor inhabitants; yet the injury sunk deeper than the atonement.”

regiment, in command of the light infantry battalion belonging to Major-General Picton's division, supported by the light infantry battalion in Major-General Nightingale's brigade, commanded by Major Dick of the 42d regiment, and the light infantry battalion in Major-General Howard's brigade, commanded by Major M'Donnell of the 92d, and the light infantry battalion of the King's German Legion, commanded by Major Aly, of the 5th battalion of the line, and by the 2d battalion 83d regiment, under Major Carr.

“ The troops maintained their position ; but having observed the repeated efforts which the enemy were making to obtain possession of the village, and being aware of the advantage which they would derive from the possession in their subsequent operations, I reinforced the village successively with the 71st regiment under Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. H. Cadogan, and the 79th under Lieut.-Colonel Cameron, and the 24th under Major Chamberlain. The former, at the head of the 71st regiment, charged the enemy, and drove them from a part of the village of which they had obtained a momentary possession.

“ Nearly at this time Lieut.-Colonel Williams was unfortunately wounded, but I hope not dangerously ; and the command devolved upon Lieut.-Colonel Cameron of the 79th.

“ The contest continued till night, when our troops remained in possession of the whole.

“ I then withdrew the light infantry battalions, and the 83d regiment, leaving the 71st and 79th regiments only in the village, and the 2d battalion 24th regiment to support them.

“ On the 4th the enemy reconnoitred the position which we had occupied on the Dos Casas river ; and during that night they moved the Duc d'Abrantes' corps from Alameda to the left of the position occupied by the sixth corps, opposite to Fuentes de Oñoro.

“ From the course of the reconnaissance on the 4th, I had imagined that the enemy would endeavour to obtain

possession of Fuentes d'Oñoro, and of the ground occupied by the troops behind that village, by crossing the Dos Casas at Pozo Velho; and in the evening I moved the 7th division, under Major-General Houstoun, to the right, in order, if possible, to protect that passage.

“ On the morning of the 5th, the 8th corps appeared in two columns, with all the cavalry, on the opposite side of the valley of the Dos Casas and Pozo Velho; and as the 6th and 9th corps also made a movement to their left, the light division, which had been brought back from the neighbourhood of Alameda, were sent with the cavalry, under Sir Stapleton Cotton, to support Major-General Houstoun; while the 1st and 3d divisions made a movement to their right, along the ridge between the Turon and Dos Casas rivers, corresponding to that of the 6th and 9th corps, on the right of the Dos Casas.

“ The 8th corps attacked Major-General Houstoun's advanced guard, consisting of the 85th regiment, under Major Macintosh, and the 2d Portuguese caçadores, under Lieut.-Colonel Nixon, and obliged them to retire; and they retired in good order, although with some loss. The 8th corps being thus established in Pozo Velho, the enemy's cavalry turned the right of the 7th division, between Pozo Velho and Nave d'Aver, from which last place Don Julian Sanchez had been obliged to retire; and the cavalry charged.

“ The charge of the advanced guard of the enemy's cavalry was met by two or three squadrons of the different regiments of British dragoons, and the enemy were driven back; and Colonel La Motte, of the 13th chasseurs, and some prisoners, taken.

“ The main body were checked and obliged to retire by the fire of Major-General Houstoun's division; and I particularly observed the Chasseurs Britanniques, under Lieut.-Colonel Eustace, as behaving in the most steady manner; and Major-General Houstoun mentions in high terms the conduct of a detachment of the Duke of Brunswick's light infantry.

“Notwithstanding that this charge was repulsed, I determined to concentrate our force towards the left, and to move the 7th and light divisions and the cavalry from Pozo Velho towards Fuentes de Oñoro, and the other two divisions.

“I had occupied Pozo Velho and that neighbourhood, in hopes that I should be able to maintain the communication across the Coa by Sabugal, as well as provide for the blockade, which objects it was now obvious were incompatible with each other; and I therefore abandoned that which was the least important, and placed the light division in reserve in the rear of the left of the 1st division, and the 7th division on some commanding ground beyond the Turon, which protected the right flank and rear of the 1st division, and covered the communication with the Coa, and prevented that of the enemy with Almeida by the roads between the Turon and that river.

“The movement of the troops upon this occasion was well conducted, although under very critical circumstances, by Major-General Houstoun, Brigadier-General Craufurd, and Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton. The 7th division was covered in its passage of the Turon by the light division under Brigadier-General Craufurd; and this last, in its march to join the 1st division, by the British cavalry.

“Our position thus extended on the high ground from the Turon to the Dos Casas. The 7th division, on the left of the Turon, covered the rear of the right; the first division, in two lines, were on the right; Colonel Ashworth's brigade, in two lines, in the centre; and the 3d division, in two lines, on the left; the light division and British artillery in reserve; and the village of Fuentes in front of the left. Don Julian's infantry joined the 7th division in Freneda; and I sent him with his cavalry to endeavour to intercept the enemy's communication with Ciudad Rodrigo.

“The enemy's efforts on the right part of our position, after it was occupied as I have above described, were confined to a cannonade, and to some charges with his cavalry upon the advanced posts. The regiments of the 1st division,

under Lieut.-Colonel Hill of the 3d regiment of guards, repulsed one of these; but as they were falling back they did not see the direction of another in sufficient time to form to oppose it, and Lieut.-Colonel Hill was taken prisoner, and many men were wounded, and some taken, before a detachment of the British cavalry could move up to their support.

“ The 2d battalion 42d regiment, under Lord Blantyre, also repulsed a charge of the cavalry directed against them.

“ They likewise attempted to push a body of light infantry upon the ravine of the Turon, to the right of the 1st division, which were repulsed by the light infantry of the guards under Lieut.-Colonel Guise, aided by five companies of the 95th under Captain O'Hare.* Major-General Nightingale was wounded in the course of the cannonade, but I hope not severely.

“ The enemy's principal effort was throughout this day again directed against Fuentes d'Oñoro; and notwithstanding that the whole of the 6th corps were at different periods of the day employed to attack this village, they could never gain more than a temporary possession of it. It was defended by the 24th, 71st, and 79th regiments, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Cameron; and these troops were supported by the light infantry battalions of the 3d division, commanded by Major Woodgate; the light infantry battalions of the 1st division, commanded by Major Dick, Major M'Donald, and Major Aly; the 6th Portuguese caçadores, commanded by Major Pinto; by the light companies in Colonel Champelmond's Portuguese brigade, under Colonel Sutton; and those in Colonel Ashworth's Portuguese brigade, under Lieut.-Colonel Pynn, and by the pickets of the 3d division, under the command of Colonel the Hon. R. Trench. Lieut.-Colonel Cameron was severely† wounded in the afternoon, and the command in the village devolved upon Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. H. Cadogan.

* Afterwards killed in the assault of Badajoz in 1812.

† Mortally.

“ The troops in Fuentes were besides supported, when pressed by the enemy, by the 74th regiment, under Major Russell Manners, and the 1st battalion 88th regiment, under Lieut.-Colonel Wallace, belonging to Colonel Mackinnon's brigade; and on one of these occasions, the 88th, with the 71st and 79th, under the command of Colonel Mackinnon, charged the enemy, and drove them through the village; and Colonel Mackinnon has reported particularly the conduct of Lieut.-Colonel Wallace, Brigade-Major Wilde, and Lieutenant and Adjutant Stewart.

“ The contest again lasted in this quarter till night, when our troops still held their post; and from that time the enemy have made no fresh attempt on any part of our position.

“ The enemy manifested an intention to attack Major-General Sir William Erskine's post at Aldea del Obispo on the same morning, with a part of the 2d corps; but the Major-General sent the 2d battalion Lusitanian legion across the ford of the Dos Casas, which obliged them to retire.

“ In the course of last night the enemy commenced retiring from their position on the Dos Casas; and this morning, at daylight, the whole was in motion. I cannot yet decide whether this movement is preparatory to some fresh attempt to raise the blockade of Almeida, or is one of decided retreat; but I have every reason to hope that they will not succeed in the first, and that they will be obliged to have recourse to the last. Their superiority in cavalry is very great, owing to the weak state of our horses, from recent fatigue and scarcity of forage, and the reduction of numbers in the Portuguese brigade of cavalry with this part of the army, in exchange for a British brigade sent into Estremadura with Marshal Sir William Beresford, owing to the failure of the measures reported to have been adopted to supply horses and men with food on the service.

“ The result of a general action, brought on by an attack upon the enemy by us, might, under those circumstances,

have been doubtful; and if the enemy had chosen to avoid it, or if they had met it, they would have taken advantage of the collection of our troops to fight this action, and throw relief into Almeida.

“ From the great superiority of force to which we have been opposed upon this occasion, your lordship will judge of the conduct of the officers and troops. The actions were partial, but very severe, and our loss has been great.* The enemy’s loss has also been very great, and they left 400 killed in the village of Fuentes, and we have many prisoners.”

Such were Lord Wellington’s brief details of a protracted action, in which defeat could have been averted only by the matchless gallantry of the allied troops, and the martial genius of their leader. Wellington never fought under more serious disadvantages. In every arm of war he was weaker than his antagonist, — in cavalry immeasurably inferior, — and Massena’s cuirassiers alone should have ensured a victory. Notwithstanding that its grand outline presented a fine battle ground, the allied position was

* “ Return of the killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of Lieut.-General Viscount Wellington, K. B., in the affairs at Fuentes d’Oñoro, on the 3d and 5th May, 1811 :—

	Officers.	Non-commd- Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	11	16	208	49	235
Wounded	81	72	1081	101	1234
Missing	7	10	300	5	317
Total	99	98	1589	155	1786

“ The Portuguese killed, wounded, and missing, are included in the above numbers.”

particularly dangerous. With the Coa in his rear, Wellington had but one point by which artillery could pass the river; and the narrow bridge at Castello Bom was ill suited for a rapid retreat, had any disaster obliged him to withdraw a beaten army. To turn his opponent's right,—seize his only communication with the left bank of the river,—and, once lodged upon the table land, overwhelm the allies with heavy masses, supported by the charges of a splendid cavalry, was evidently Massena's design,—and Loison, consequently, not waiting for his arrival, endeavoured to assist the Prince of Essling's intended operation, by seizing the strong village on which the left of the allies was appuied.

The assault on Fuentes d'Oñoro was furiously made—and it was as fiercely repelled. Oppressed by a heavy cannonade, the lower village was gradually abandoned to the enemy, but the chapel and craggy eminence were desperately maintained. Loison redoubled his efforts; Wellington reinforced his hard-pressed battalions; and when night fell,* the lower houses of Fuentes remained in possession of the French, and the upper village was occupied by British regiments.

The *reconnaissance* of the next day confirmed Massena in his first intention of storming the opposite flank of the position, and gaining the plateau, which stretched away from the rugged banks of the Dos Casas. Julian Sanchez, after a short contest, was driven across the Turon,† the village

* “Night was closing; undismayed by a heavy loss, and unwearied by a hardly-contested action, a cannon, as it appeared to be, being seen on the adjacent heights, the 71st dashed across the rivulet, and bearing down all resistance, reached and won the object of their enterprise. On reaching it, the Highlanders discovered, that in the haze of the evening they had mistaken a tumbrel for a gun—but they bore it off, a trophy of their gallantry.”—*Victories of the British Armies*.

† “Julian Sanchez immediately retired across the Turones, partly in fear, but more in anger, at the death of his lieutenant, who, having foolishly ridden close up to the enemy, making many violent gestures, was mistaken for a French officer, and shot by a soldier of the guards, before the action commenced.”—*Napier*.

of Poco Velho was carried, and Montbrun poured his heavy squadrons over the level summit of the height. After a noble, but unavailing resistance, the allied cavalry were forced to retire, and seek protection from the infantry.* The French horsemen instantly galloped forward. They found the light infantry in squares, and unassailable; but as the seventh division had not effected that formation, many were cut down in line, and a troop of horse artillery completely surrounded. With other troops a certain defeat must have ensued; but at this fearful moment their own gallantry and discipline saved the British soldiers. Although surprised by the sudden rush of the cuirassiers, the chas-seurs Britanniques threw themselves behind a broken fence, and maintaining a rolling fire that fell upon the assailants with murderous effect, they checked the onward career of the enemy. At one place, however, the fury of the fight seemed for a time to centre. "A great commotion was observed amongst the French squadrons; men and officers closed in confusion towards one point where a thick dust was rising, and where loud cries and the sparkling of blades and flashing of pistols indicated some extraordinary occurrence. Suddenly the multitude was violently agitated, an English shout arose, the mass was rent asunder, and Norman Ramsay burst forth at the head of his battery, his horses breathing fire, and stretching like greyhounds along the plain, his guns bounding like things of no weight, and the mounted gunners in close and compact order protecting the rear."†

At this period of the day, while isolated displays of gallantry might for a time, have checked the progress of the French, still the final issue of the contest seemed fraught with danger to the British general. Wellington's right was

* Though weak in number, and from the scarcity and bad quality of the forage, mounted on horses too feeble to sustain the shock of Napoleon's favourite cuirassiers, the British cavalry behaved most gallantly. They met the charge, and even repulsed it; and a colonel of dragoons (Lamotte) was taken prisoner by General Stewart, after "fighting hand to hand."

† Napier.

turned—his divisions separated—a murderous combat raging on his left in Fuentes, and to secure success, it was imperative that his outflanked wing should be instantly thrown back, and his communications with the bridge of Sabugal abandoned. “Looking with just confidence rather to victory than to any likelihood of retreating, he drew in the right of his army, sending the 7th division over the Turon to Frenada, on its left bank.” The light division, covered by the cavalry, retired over the plain—and the 1st, 3d, and Portuguese formed line nearly at right angles with their first position, now resting their battalions upon the height which ran perpendicularly with Fuentes, their left being still pivoted on that village.

To effect this delicate change of formation was indeed a perilous essay; one which a master-spirit only dare adopt, and one which might be intrusted alone to British soldiers. To retire troops across a level plain, the outer flank having a surface of four miles to traverse, surrounded by heavy masses of French cavalry, flushed with the full assurance of approaching victory, and waiting a false movement to fall on, was certainly a daring resolution. Far as the eye could range, the plateau was crowded with camp-followers and equipage. These fugitives added to the confusion, and consequently increased the risks; “and if any of the divisions had given way, the enemy would have burst in upon them with such force, as would have sent the disorderly multitude headlong against some of its own squares, and thrown the whole into irreparable confusion.”*

“But in that dread hour, perhaps the most perilous of the whole war for England, she was saved by the skill of her chief and the incomparable valour of her soldiers. Slowly, and in perfect order, the squares of the 1st, 7th, and light divisions, retired for many miles, flanked on either side by the terrible cuirassiers of Montbrun, flushed with the newly won glories of Wagram; pressed in rear by the

* Napier.

columns and batteries of Ney's corps, which had broken the Russian army at Friedland. In vain their thundering squadrons swept round these serried bands, and the light of the British bayonets was, for a time, lost in the blaze of the French cuirasses; from every throng the unbroken squares still emerged, pursuing their steady way amidst a terrific fire; the 7th division successfully accomplished its long semicircular sweep, crossed the Turon, and took up its ground between that stream and the Coa; the centre of the army soon gained the ridge of heights for which it was destined; while the left, with invincible firmness, still made good the crags and chapel of Fuentes d'Oñoro. When the whole had taken up their ground, Massena recoiled from the prospect of attacking such an enemy as he had now combated, posted in dense masses on a ridge not two miles in length, and covered on either flank by a steep ravine; and, confining himself to a cannonade along its front, redoubled his efforts on the left, where he sent the whole division of Drouet against the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro."*

The attack was made with all that reckless desperation, which indicated that on success or failure the fortunes of a doubtful day were staked. Every arm was used—cavalry appeared waiting an opportunity to act—infantry burst into the lower village in heavy masses—and while the French artillery poured a storm of shot upon the houses and enclosures, the enemy advanced with imposing steadiness, although their passage led through a street choked with the dead and dying, who had already perished in vain but reiterated attempts. The British regiments, far over-matched in numbers, were gradually forced back upon the heights and chapel, after sustaining a heavy loss, two companies of the 79th having been taken, and Colonel Cameron slain.† But beyond the upper village no effort of the

* Alison's History of Europe.

† "Lieut.-Colonel Cameron was mortally wounded, by an enemy who stepped out of the ranks to aim at him. His countrymen, the Highlanders, at whose head he fell, set up a shriek, and attacked the French with a spirit not to be





enemy could drive its gallant defenders. In vain the French were frequently and strongly reinforced, until the entire of the 6th, and a part of Count d'Erlon's corps were engaged. Lord Wellington, in turn, sent in his reserves, and the assault and defence were on both sides obstinately continued, the fortune of the day alternating as fresh combatants took part in the affray. "At one time the fighting was on the banks of the stream and amongst the lower houses; at another upon the rugged heights and round the chapel, and some of the enemy's skirmishers even penetrated completely through towards the main position."*

For a moment the upper village seemed lost. A heavy column followed the tirailleurs closely—and, unchecked by a well-directed fusilade, the enemy crowned the chapel ridge, and announced with loud cheers that Fuentes was at last their own. That triumph was a short one. Colonel Mackinnon directed the British battalions to advance, and gallantly that order was obeyed. Supported by the 71st and 79th, Colonel Wallace led his own regiment on; and his brief address—"At them, Eighty-eighth!" was answered with the soul-stirring huzza, with which an Irish regiment rushes to the onset. The Imperial guard waited and received the charge—bayonet crossed bayonet—and the combatants fought hand to hand. But it was the struggle of a moment, and the best soldiers of France gave way before the Connaught Rangers. In the awful shock, many were impaled and lifted fairly from the ground;† while broken, trodden down, and slaughtered, the routed enemy were forced in wild disorder by the Irish and Highland soldiers through the same street by which, in all the confidence of approaching victory, they had so recently and gallantly advanced.

The French loss was never accurately given. It was

resisted: the man who had slain their commander was pierced by many bayonets at once—and the leader of the French, a person remarkable for his stature and fine form, was killed, while the Highlanders in their vengeance drove the enemy before them."—*Southey*.

* Napier.

† Alison.

erroneously estimated after the action at little short of 5,000 *hors de combat*, but probably half the amount would come nearer to the truth. The French absurdly stated their casualties at 400—and one circumstance alone would prove that this was ridiculously incorrect, as 500 of their dead and wounded horses were left upon the battle-ground.

“ Evening closed the combat. Massena’s columns on the right were halted, and his 6th corps, with which he had endeavoured to storm Fuentes d’Oñoro, was withdrawn—the whole French army bivouacking in the order in which they had stood when the engagement closed. The British lighted their fires, posted their pickets, and occupied the field they had so bravely held; and ‘ both parties lay down to rest, with a confident assurance on their minds, that the battle was only intermitted till the return of daylight.’

“ A brigade of the light division relieved the gallant defenders of Fuentes—and preparatory to the expected renewal of attack, some works were thrown up to defend the upper village and the ground behind it. But these precautions were unnecessary; Massena remained during the next day in front of his antagonist, but exhibited no anxiety to renew the combat. The 7th found the British, as usual, under arms at dawn, but the day passed as quietly as the preceding one had done. On the 8th, the French columns were observed in full retreat, marching on the road to Ciudad Rodrigo; thus proving that the French marshal, with an army reinforced by every battalion and squadron he could collect from Galicia and Castile, had been beaten by four divisions of the British army. With that unblushing assurance however, for which the French marshals have been remarkable, defeat was tortured into conquest, and Massena did not hesitate to call Fuentes d’Oñoro a victory. But the falsity was self-apparent—the avowed object for which the battle had been fought was unattained—he failed in succouring the beleaguered city—and Almeida was left to its fate.”*

* Victories of the British Armies.

In calmly reviewing the varied fortunes of this long and sanguinary conflict, it is impossible, in weighing the merits of those commanding, not to award an immeasurable superiority to the talents of the British general. Obligated to abide a battle, and that too, upon a field in no way favourable for an inferior force to sustain the assault of a superior enemy, Wellington's dispositions were masterly, and every arm he had was ably and usefully employed. Massena, on the other hand, displayed none of that military genius which had placed him foremost among Napoleon's lieutenants. He wasted his strength upon the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro; and with the key of the position in his possession, he allowed this advantage to remain profitless, when through Pozo Velho he could have poured his whole force upon the plateau, and overwhelmed the British right wing by mere numbers.* The ground was favourable for cavalry to act efficiently—but the French marshal's magnificent dragoons were neither skilfully nor vigorously employed; and while they should have been deciding the fortune of the fight, they were trifling with the partidas of Julian Sanchez. "Having indicated all the errors of the English general's position, the Prince of Essling stopped short at the very moment when he should have sprung forward."† To whatever cause it may be ascribed, the movements of the French marshal throughout the 5th were marked by irregularity and delay; and his attacks upon opposite flanks, which, to have ensured success, should have been simultaneous, were made with a con-

* "After the right wing was thrown back, on perfectly open and level ground, one point only resting on the strong village in question; yet was that strong point constantly attacked, while the army was left totally unassailed."—*Raoul*.

† "By some this has been attributed to negligence, by others to disgust at being superseded by Marmont; but the true reason seems to be, that discord in his army had arisen to actual insubordination. The imperial guards would not charge at his order; Junot did not second him cordially; Loison neglected his instructions; Drouet sought to spare his own divisions in the fight; and Reynier remained perfectly inactive. Thus the machinery of battle being shaken, would not work."—*Napier*.

siderable interval between them. In short, Massena's genius seemed asleep, and none could have imagined that the victor of Aspern, was he who failed so signally at Fuentes d'Oñoro.



CHAPTER XXI.

ALMEIDA CLOSELY BLOCKADED—THE GOVERNOR PREPARES TO BLOW UP THE
FORTRESS—FAULTY DISPOSITIONS IN THE BLOCKADE—BRENNIER'S ESCAPE
—DETAIL OF IT TO LORD LIVERPOOL—LORD WELLINGTON DEEPLY MORTIFIED
AT THE OCCURRENCE—NAPOLEON AND WELLINGTON COMPARED—LETTER TO
GENERAL CAMERON—SIEGE OF BADAJOZ—IT PROGRESSES SLOWLY, AND IS
RAISED ON THE NIGHT OF THE 13TH—LORD WELLINGTON ARRIVES AT ELVAS
—HIS RAPID JOURNEY—ALBUERA—ALLIED POSITION—BERESFORD'S ORDER
OF BATTLE—RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE ALLIED AND FRENCH ARMIES—
SOULT'S DISPOSITIONS—BATTLE OF ALBUERA.

MASSENA'S retreat was instantly followed up by a closer blockade of that fortress, which he had avowedly crossed the Agueda to relieve; and as it was known that the scanty supply of food within the walls of Almeida was almost exhausted, the fall of the city was deemed inevitable. Brennier, who had already distinguished himself at Vimiero, where he had been wounded and taken prisoner, but subsequently exchanged, was governor; and to a more trusty soldier the custody of a place of strength had never been confided.

Although fully expecting that the Prince of Essling would succeed in his operations, and oblige the blockading division to withdraw, Brennier, nevertheless, had mined the works, and made every preparation by which he might, if necessary, ruin the defences of the place. The heavy firing at Fuentes told him that a severe action had been fought. A day passed—no succour came; and during the night, a French private reached the fortress, having with wonderful sagacity eluded the sentries and pickets who were on duty. Tillet confirmed Brennier's suspicions that Massena had

been seriously repulsed—and brought with him, at the same time, the Prince of Essling's order for the immediate evacuation of Almeida.

Every precaution had been taken by Lord Wellington to ensure the capture of the garrison; and, at his own solicitation, to General Alexander Campbell the details of the investment, with ample means to effect it, were intrusted.

“Too great confidence, either upon the allied strength, or the weakness of the garrison, most probably led him to adopt an imperfect system of blockade, which led to mortifying results. His dispositions were entirely erroneous. It is true that the right face of Almeida was vigilantly watched—but there, no movements could have been made with any prospect of succeeding. The left unfortunately was neglected—and the banks of the Agueda, and bridge at Barba de Puerco, on the direct route to the French outposts, were left unguarded. This oversight was generally noticed; and though the blockade of the fortress had been in the first instance unreservedly confided to Campbell, the faulty method of his dispositions obliged Lord Wellington to order the division of Sir William Erskine to march and observe the left face of Almeida, while a battalion was ordered to the bridge. But this was not effected in proper time; and a delay in the transmission of the orders produced a very annoying event, and enabled the French garrison to get away.”*

For two days Brennier continued his work of destruction; and it was effected with so much cleverness, that frequent explosions attracted no particular attention from the blockaders.† At midnight of the 10th, all being ripe for the attempt, the mines were fired—and by moonlight, the garrison issued from the fortress in solid columns, bayoneting

* Victories of the British Armies.

† “He ruined all the principal bastions, and kept up a constant fire of the artillery in a singular manner, for always he fired several guns at one moment with very heavy charges, placing one across the muzzle of another, so that, while some shots flew towards the besiegers, and a loud explosion was heard, others destroyed pieces without attracting notice.”—*Napier*.

any sentries whom they encountered, and passing between the quarters of the reserves with a precision that seemed unaccountable. Lord Wellington was justly irritated at this singular escape; and in his official letter to Lord Liverpool, he detailed the particulars of an occurrence which he justly considered so discreditable to all concerned.

“MY LORD,

“*Villa Fermosa, 15th May, 1811.*”

“No part of the enemy’s army remained on the left of the Agueda on the evening of the 10th instant, excepting one brigade of cavalry, close to the bridge of Ciudad Rodrigo. The 2d corps had crossed at Barba de Puerco and the ford of Val de Espino, and were cantoned in that neighbourhood; and our advanced posts were upon the Azava and the Lower Agueda.

“The 6th division resumed the duty of the blockade of Almeida on that evening; and Major-General Sir William Erskine was ordered to send a battalion to Barba de Puerco to guard the bridge there, which had been previously ordered, and had been posted, to observe the passages of the Dos Casas between Aldea del Obispo and Barba de Puerco.

“The enemy blew up some mines which they had constructed at the works of Almeida at a little before one of the morning of the 11th, and immediately attacked the pickets by which the place was observed, and forced their way through them. They fired but little; and they appear to have marched between the bodies of troops posted to support the pickets; and in particular could not have passed far from the right of the Queen’s regiment.

“Upon the first alarm Brig.-General Pack, who was at Malpartida, joined the pickets, and continued to follow and to fire upon the enemy, as a guide for the march of the other troops employed in the blockade; and Major-General Campbell marched from Malpartida with a part of the 1st battalion 36th regiment. But the enemy continued their march in a solid, compact body, without firing; and were well guided between the positions occupied by our troops.

“ The 4th regiment, which was ordered to occupy Barba de Puerco, unfortunately missed the road, and did not arrive there till the enemy had reached the place, and commenced to descend to the bridge, and at the same moment with the 36th regiment with Major-General Campbell, and the light battalions of the 5th division, which Major-General Sir William Erskine had detached from Aldea del Obispo to Barba de Puerco, as soon as he had heard that the enemy had come out from Almeida.

“ The enemy suffered very considerable loss, both in prisoners and in killed and wounded, as well in the march from Almeida as in the passage of the Agueda. It appears that that part of the 2d corps which was in San Felices formed upon the river, to protect their passage, as soon as they heard the firing; and Lieut.-Colonel——, of the —th, who had crossed with a detachment of the —th and —th regiments,* was obliged to retire with some loss.†

“ I enclose the reports of Major-General Campbell, Brig.-General Pack, and other officers employed, upon the transactions of this night; to which I add the reports of General Regnier, and of General Brennier to the Prince of Essling, which have been intercepted and brought to me. From the former your lordship will observe that the arrival of the

* 4th and 36th.

† “ Return of the killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of Lieut.-General Lord Viscount Wellington, K.B., at Barba de Puerco, on the 11th May, 1811.

“ *Head Quarters, Villa Fermosa, 15th May, 1811.*

	Officers.	Non-comd. Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-Commission- ed Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	—	—	4	—	4
Wounded	1	—	15	—	16
Missing ,	1	1	14	—	16
Total	2	1	33	—	36

garrison at Barba de Puerco was entirely unexpected; and that it was, as reported in my letter of the 10th instant, left to its fate by the enemy.

“The enemy are indebted for the small part of the garrison which they have saved principally to the unfortunate mistake of the road to Barba de Puerco by the 4th regiment. During the whole period of the blockade, but particularly during the period that the enemy’s army were between the Dos Casas and the Azava, the garrison were in the habit of firing cannon during the night; and the pickets near the place were frequently attacked. On the night of the 7th there had been a very heavy fire of cannon from the place, and the pickets were attacked; and another on the night of the 8th; and the Queen’s regiment in particular, and the other troops employed in the blockade, were induced to believe that the explosion which they heard on the morning of the 11th was of the same description with those which they had heard on the preceding nights; and the Queen’s regiment did not move at all, nor the other troops, till the cause of the explosion had been ascertained.

“Since the 11th instant the enemy have continued their retreat towards the Tormes; and it has been reported to me that they have crossed that river, and are on their march towards the Douro. But I have not received this report from any authority on which I can rely.

“I have detached from this army, into the Alentejo, the 3d and 7th divisions of infantry; and I have ordered the 2d hussars, which have arrived at Celerico, to march in that direction likewise. My reason for making this detachment is to be able to support Sir William Beresford in strength, if the enemy should attempt to interrupt the siege of Badajoz; and as all is now quiet on this frontier, I propose to return to the Alentejo in the course of a few days.

“Sir William Beresford invested Badajoz on both sides of the Guadiana on the 8th, and broke ground on both sides on that night. The enemy made a sortie, and endeavoured to prevent our troops from occupying the ground, from

which they were to direct their attack against the outwork of San Christoval, but the enemy were driven in. They had made another sortie on the morning of the 10th, in large force, and were driven in again by our troops; but I am concerned to add that our loss upon this occasion was very severe, owing to the gallant but imprudent advance of the troops quite to the glacis of San Christoval, and to a situation in which they were exposed to the fire of musketry and grape from that outwork, as well as from the body of the place.

* * * * *

“Your lordship will observe from Major-General Campbell’s report of the transactions at Barba de Puerco, that the same imprudence to which I have above referred was the cause of the loss sustained upon that occasion; and all the loss of prisoners in the action at Fuentes d’Oñoro on the 3d and 5th instant, was to be attributed to the impetuosity of the officers and troops, which could not be kept within bounds.

“The corps of Spanish troops under General Blake, which had been landed in the Guadiana, had drawn near the frontiers of Estremadura, in order to cooperate with Sir William Beresford in the attack of Badajoz; and I understand that Marshal Soult is employed in fortifying Seville, where he has collected a large body of troops.”

The partial escape of the garrison of Almeida, was, in every point of view, a most annoying and discreditable occurrence. “It seemed as if, by this untoward event,” says a staff officer, “all the advantages obtained by the battle of Fuentes d’Oñoro were thrown away. Not that we very deeply regretted the escape of the individuals: they were brave men, had made a bold venture, and deserved that it should be crowned with success; but it was mortifying to reflect that now Massena might, with some show of reason, speak of his late operations as a victory, and not as a defeat. He might, in a specious manner, inform Europe that he had manœuvred merely for the purpose of bringing

off the garrison of Almeida; and as the garrison had actually escaped, how could we contradict him? It is not worth while to dwell longer on this affair; but I will venture to affirm that no one who witnessed the effect this disappointment produced upon our army, will ever be able to forget it.”*

That Lord Wellington was deeply chagrined at the carelessness and bad arrangements which occasioned the affair, may be inferred from the frequent allusions to it in his correspondence. In a second and private letter to Lord Liverpool, he thus more strongly expresses himself.

“Possibly I have to reproach myself for not having been on the spot; but really, when the enemy’s whole army had crossed the Agueda, with the exception of one brigade of cavalry, in front of Ciudad Rodrigo, I did not think it probable that the attempt to escape would be made; and having employed two divisions and a brigade, to prevent the escape of 1,400 men, who I did not think it likely would attempt to escape, the necessity of my attending personally to this operation, after I had been the whole day on the Azava, did not occur to me. However, it is that alone in the whole operation in which I have to reproach myself, as everything was done that could be done in the way of order and instruction.

“I certainly feel, every day, more and more the difficulty of the situation in which I am placed. I am obliged to be everywhere, and if absent from any operation, something goes wrong. It is to be hoped that the general and other officers of the army will at last acquire that experience which will teach them that success can be attained only by attention to the most minute details; and by tracing every part of every operation from its origin to its conclusion, point by point, and ascertaining that the whole is understood by those who are to execute it.”†

* Lord Londonderry’s Narrative.

† Dated Villa Fermosa, 15th May, 1811.

It has been customary with those whose wishes lead them to place Wellington's character in an unamiable light, to compare him with Napoleon, in representing both as stern and unpitying soldiers, working their purposes out, reckless of the sufferings they occasioned, and dead to the kindlier sympathies of humanity. But in the rare exhibitions of softer feeling made by both, no men differed more. Napoleon's was a public display; Wellington's a secret offering. An ostentatious visit to his hospitals—a condolatory address to a passing *ambulance* which bore his wounded from the field—the parade of sorrow beside a dying friend—all with Napoleon assumed the semblance of acting, and seemed rather intended to elicit applause from the lookers-on, than give expression to heartfelt sympathy. Wellington made no open show of sorrow. He saw old friends fall—he rode past “the dying and the dead”—the same stern calmness in his look—the same firm and unalterable determination in his bearing. For the sufferers he had no empty words; but when others slept, he was toiling in his bureau to obtain means for their relief; and when none expected him, he visited his hospitals in private, and from personal inspection, assured himself that those to whom his sick and wounded were committed had not neglected their trust.

At Fuentes d'Oñoro a casualty occurred which, from accidental circumstances, excited unusual interest. In defending the village during the last furious assault of the 6th corps, the 79th Highlanders sustained a heavy loss; and among those badly wounded on the occasion, the son of General Cameron, a young officer of high promise, was included. Of this misfortune Lord Wellington had already apprized his father; but, as the result proved, he had not told the worst. Young Cameron's wound was mortal; and though oppressed with the details of a voluminous correspondence at the moment, the British general still found time to convey to the bereaved parent the melancholy tidings. The simple language in which the fatal event was communicated, carries its own evidence of coming from the

heart. The consolation was a soldier's—but the spirit of the letter showed how acutely the writer felt the sorrow it would occasion to a gallant veteran.

“When I wrote to you last week I felt that I conveyed to you information which would give you great pain; but I hoped that I had made you acquainted with the full extent of the misfortune which had befallen you. Unfortunately, however, those upon whose judgment I relied were deceived: your son's wound was worse than it was then supposed to be: it was mortal, and he died on the day before yesterday, at two in the morning.

“I am convinced that you will credit the assurance which I give you, that I condole with you most sincerely upon this misfortune, of the extent of which no man is more capable than myself of forming an estimate, from the knowledge which I had, and the just estimate which I had formed, in my own opinion, of the merits of your son.

“You will always regret and lament his loss, I am convinced; but I hope that you will derive some consolation from the reflection that he fell in the performance of his duty, at the head of your brave regiment, loved and respected by all that knew him, in an action in which, if possible, the British troops surpassed everything they had ever done before, and of which the result was most honourable to His Majesty's arms.

“At all events, Providence having deprived you of your son, I cannot conceive a string of circumstances more honourable and glorious than those under which he lost his life, in the cause of his country. Believe me, however, that, although I am fully alive to all these honourable circumstances attending his death, I most sincerely condole with you upon your loss.”*

Immediately after the battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro, the Prince of Essling, with Ney, Junot, and Loison, returned

* Dated Villa Fermosa, 15th May, 1811.

to France, leaving the army of Portugal in cantonments on the Tormes, under the command of Marmont, Duke of Ragusa. At the same time intelligence reached Lord Wellington, which induced him to repair instantly to Elvas; and while Massena was hastening towards the Pyrenees, his successful opponent was hurrying to the Guadiana.

The information conveyed in his last despatch to Lord Liverpool, respecting Beresford's operations, had been substantially correct. Badajoz* had been invested on its southern face upon the 4th of May, and on the other (right) bank of the river upon the 8th. After dark, and on the same evening, ground was broken before Fort Christoval, and false attacks made on the Pardaleras and Picurina. "That against the Pardaleras consisted in opening the old French parallel on the Sierra del Viento, and throwing up a battery for four guns. That against the Picurina was nearly a similar undertaking on the hill of St. Michael, at 900 yards distance from it."† The progress of the work was slow; "the soil proved extremely hard and rocky, and the garrison opened a very heavy fire of shot, shells, and musketry, before the first gabion was placed; in consequence, cover was only obtained to enable ten men to work in the battery at day-light, nor would the trench of support cover more than thirty."‡

From the inefficiency of the marshal's resources in the *materiel* for carrying on a siege, and the weakness of the numbers he could afford for the working and protecting parties, his operations went tardily on. On the 12th, intelligence reached him that Soult was in full march to relieve the place, and that his advanced guard was already at Llerena. Not a moment was to be lost—his force must be instantly concentrated—orders to that effect were issued accordingly, and the siege of Badajoz was raised.

"On the night of the 13th all the artillery was withdrawn from the batteries, the platforms taken up, and the

* Badajoz, *ante* 249.

† Jones's Journal of the Sieges.

‡ Ibid.

splinter proofs removed. On the 14th every exertion was used to send the artillery and stores to the rear, and at night the fascines, gabions, and materials which could not be moved were burned. At noon on the 15th, the whole of the siege artillery and ammunition being across the Guadiana, the flying bridge was drawn ashore. Part of the army had already marched to Valverde, and the 4th division and some Spaniards only remained on the left of the Guadiana to cover these operations. On the 15th they also moved, and the siege was completely raised. At the moment the rear guard drew off, the garrison made a sortie in force, by which a Portuguese light battalion suffered severely, making the total loss during the operation above 100 killed and 650 wounded."*

On the same evening Lord Wellington left Villa Fermosa, accompanied by a part of his staff—and travelling at the rate of sixty miles a day, without baggage or impediments of any description, arrived in Elvas before dark on the 19th. Whilst performing this arduous journey, a variety of rumours relative to late transactions met him at every stage. At one place it was stated that the enemy were coming on in force, and that a battle might hourly be expected; at another, that Marshal Beresford had resolved upon a retreat, not feeling himself equal to oppose the French; and, at a third, that a great action had been fought, and that it had ended in favour of the allies. "It will readily be imagined," says the narrator,† "that the last rumour, though it entered in no respect into particulars, tended, in no slight degree, to elevate our spirits, and quicken our pace. On reaching Elvas, however, more accurate details were given; for Colonel Arbuthnot, from the marshal's head quarters, met us here, and from him we received an official account of one of the most obstinate, as well as sanguinary actions, in which British troops were ever engaged."

When Soult was fortifying Seville he had no fears for

* Jones's Journal of the Sieges.

† Lord Londonderry.

the safety of Andalusia, but, determined to raise the siege of Badajoz, he wished to deceive Beresford, and thus induce a false security. On the first tidings however, of his advance, the marshal, contrary to the advice of his engineers, exercised a sound discretion and raised the siege.

At an interview at Valverde with the Spanish generals, on the 13th—the intelligence of the rapid approach of the Duke of Dalmatia having been confirmed—it was unanimously determined that a battle should be risked; and Albuera having been selected as the best position, Blake undertook that the detached divisions of the Spanish army should be concentrated there, before noon of the 15th.

The village of Albuera is a street of mean houses, with a church, situated on a little river, from which it is named. This village is traversed by the high road leading from Seville to Badajoz; which, about two hundred yards to the right, crosses the river by a handsome bridge of stone. Immediately to the left of Albuera, and just below the rough and rising ground on which it stands, there is another bridge, of unhewn stone, old, narrow, and incommodious. The river, in summer, is not above knee-deep. Its banks, to the left of the old bridge, and directly in front of the village, are very abrupt and difficult; but to the right of the main bridge the passage of the stream is easy for all arms.*

The position chosen by the allied leaders was an undulating ridge, having the Albuera river in its front and the Arroya in its rear. The extreme extent might be four miles. A rivulet called the Ferdia unites itself immediately above the village with the Albuera; and the intermediate surface, and the whole country beyond the larger stream, are thickly, but dispersedly, covered with *illex* trees, a species of wood sufficient to conceal the formation, but not interrupt the movements of an army.

At three in the afternoon of the 15th, the allied cavalry were driven, in great confusion, over the Albuera, aban-

* Sherer.

doning the wooded heights to the enemy, an advantage of which Soult instantly availed himself.

With but a few miles to march, Blake moved so tardily, that his leading brigades did not reach their intended battle ground until midnight, and the entire were not up for some hours afterwards. In his disposition of the allies, Beresford gave the Spaniards the right of the position, as the ground was more elevated, and consequently less assailable. But unfortunately, a wooded height which overlooked the Valverde road was left unoccupied; and this mistake enabled the French marshal to concentrate, during the night, 15,000 men and 40 pieces of artillery within cannon shot; and any advantage the ground might have afforded for defence, was greatly overbalanced by the facilities of attack which the possession of the Valverde wood gave to an enemy, who knew so well as the Duke of Dalmatia did, how the omission could be turned to the best account.*

The Portuguese brigades were on the left; the British in the centre; and the cavalry in the rear. The allied force amounted to 30,000 men, of whom about 2,000 were cavalry. Of these, nearly one-half were Spanish troops; the remainder, British and Portuguese, in nearly an equal proportion.

In gross numbers the French marshal was inferior to his opponent; in infantry, he was weaker by a third; but in the other arms, dangerously superior. He brought 4,000 cavalry and 50 heavy guns into action; all were French troops; and all consequently, admirable soldiers. In every requisite Soult's *corps d'armée* was complete; and, save his master, few could employ it more skilfully, and none with more promptitude and determination.

* "General Blake's corps was on the right in two lines; its left, on the Valverde road, joined the right of Major-General the Hon. William Stewart's division, the left of which reached the Badajoz road, where commenced the right of Major-General Hamilton's division, which closed the left of the line. General Cole's division, with one brigade of General Hamilton's, formed the second line of the British and Portuguese army."

After a careful *reconnaissance* on the evening of the 15th, the Duke of Dalmatia selected the right of the allies as the object for his greatest effort. Favoured by the darkness, he lodged Girard's corps, Ruty's artillery, and the cavalry of Latour Maubourg, in the wood; and when morning broke, a powerful force was already formed in close column, and perfectly concealed, though within ten minutes' march of the Spanish line.

"The enemy, on the morning of the 16th, did not long delay his attack. At eight o'clock he was observed to be in movement, and his cavalry was seen passing the rivulet of Albuera, considerably above our right; and shortly after, he marched out of the wood opposite to us a strong force of cavalry, and two heavy columns of infantry, pointing them to our front, as if to attack the village and bridge of Albuera. During this time, under cover of his vastly superior cavalry, he was filing the principal body of his infantry over the river beyond our right; and it was not long before his intention appeared to be to turn us by that flank, and to cut us off from Valverde."*

On perceiving that the right was seriously menaced, Beresford had sent Colonel Hardinge to request that Blake would change his front. But the Spanish general doggedly insisted that the village was the true object of attack, and refused to correct his alignment. The marshal rode in person to the right; and as the French columns were now observed in rapid march, "yielding to this evidence, Blake proceeded to make the evolution, yet with such pedantic slowness, that Beresford, impatient of his folly, took the direction himself."†

But before the change could be effected, the day might have been considered by Beresford as lost! "Two-thirds of the French were in a compact order of battle on a line perpendicular to his right, and his army, disordered and composed of different nations, was still in the difficult act of

* Beresford's Despatch to Wellington.

† Napier.



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11. 11. 11.



changing its front. It was in vain that he endeavoured to form the Spanish line sufficiently in advance to give room for the second division to support it; the French guns opened, their infantry threw out a heavy musketry, and their cavalry, outflanking the front and charging here and there, put the Spaniards in disorder at all points; in a short time the latter gave way, and Soult, thinking the whole army was yielding, pushed forward his columns, while his reserves also mounted the hill, and General Rutý placed all the batteries in position.*

Seeing the desperate state of affairs, General William Stewart bravely, but rashly, endeavoured to restore the battle; and pushing his brigade up the hill, he mounted, for greater despatch, by columns of companies. But as the regiments were endeavouring to open into line, each as it crowned the ridge in the loose order it had advanced in, the French light cavalry, under cover of a heavy shower of rain, passed round the right flank of the brigade, and came in a thundering onset direct upon their rear. A sad slaughter ensued—and every regiment, except the 31st, which fortunately had not began to deploy, was literally cut to pieces. The lancers galloped right and left, spearing men without mercy who could neither escape, nor, from confusion and surprise, offer an effective resistance; while the Spaniards, regardless that their fire was falling fast upon the English ranks, kept up an unabating fusilade—but when ordered to advance, and succour men who were perishing through the brave but rash celerity with which they had rushed to their assistance, no power could move them forward.†

* Napier.

† “When Stewart’s imprudence in loosely bringing Colborne’s brigade into action, had occasioned it a loss short only of annihilation,—and the Spaniards, though they could not be induced to advance, fired without ceasing with an English regiment in their front, Beresford actually seized an ensign and dragged him forward with the colours, hoping that these useless troops would be inspirited to follow. Not a man stirred—and the standard-

Happily the weather cleared; and the distressed brigade was observed by General Lumley, who rode at speed to the rescue. The British cavalry charged nobly. In turn, the lancers were taken in the rear; and numbers of these desperadoes fell beneath the sabres of the English horsemen.

The mist which had favoured this sanguinary charge, averted also in a great degree, the fatal consequences it must have otherwise produced. Soult, from the obscurity of the weather, could not see the battle field with sufficient clearness, to allow him to push forward his infantry, and consummate the destruction of a brigade, already half exterminated. The 31st regiment steadily maintained its ground—the British artillery came up—Houghton's brigade cleared the hill and deployed in beautiful order—two Spanish regiments were brought forward,—and the battle was restored.

Though for a moment checked, the French soon renewed their efforts to break the English line; but the British regiments stood with a stubborn gallantry that refused to yield an inch. On both sides, the batteries poured torrents of grape at half range, and the roar of musketry was incessant. Upon the close formation of the French, the storm fell with terrible violence—whole sections fell—but still these noble soldiers remained unshaken by this crushing fire; and their reserves were coming rapidly up. A column appeared already moving round the right flank of the British, — ammunition failed, — their fusilade gradually became feebler,—the lancers charged again, and a battery was taken. That moment was the crisis. To retreat, was Beresford's first thought,—orders were being issued to

bearer, when the marshal's grasp relaxed, instantly flew back to herd with his cold-blooded associates. In every change of the fight, and on every part of the field, Beresford was seen conspicuously; and whatever might have been his failing as a general, his bravery as a man, should have commanded the respect of many, who have since treated his arrangements with unsparing severity.'—*Victories of the British Armies.*

commence it,—when Colonel Hardinge saw that the battle might yet be won—and, without having obtained the marshal's permission, he ordered the 4th division and a brigade of the 2d to advance, and thus redeemed the fortunes of a day which all besides thought desperate.

“ In a few minutes more the remnant of the British must have abandoned the hill or perished. The French reserve was on its march to assist the front column of the enemy, while with the allies all was in confusion; and as if the slaughter required increase, a Spanish and English regiment were firing in mutual error upon each other. Six guns were in possession of the French, and their lancers, riding furiously over the field, threatened the feeble remnant of the British still in line, and speared the wounded without mercy. At this fearful moment the boundless gallantry of British officers displayed itself; Colonel Arbuthnot, under the double musketry, rushed between the mistaken regiments, and stopped the firing; Cole pushed up the hill, scattered the lancers, recovered the guns, and passed the right of the skeleton of Houghton's brigade, at the same instant that Abercrombie appeared upon its left. Leaving the broken regiments in its rear, the fusileer brigade came forward with imposing gallantry, and boldly confronted the French, now reinforced by a part of its reserve, and who were, as they believed, coming forward to annihilate the ‘ feeble few ’ that had still survived the murderous contest. From the daring attitude of the fresh regiments, Soult perceived too late, that the battle was not yet won; and, under a tremendous fire of artillery, he endeavoured to break up his close formation and open out his front. For a moment the storm of grape, poured from Ruty's well-served artillery, staggered the fusileers,—but it was only for a moment. Though Soult rushed into the thickest of the fire, and encouraged and animated his men,—though the cavalry gathered on their flank and threatened it with destruction—on went those noble regiments; volley after volley falling into the crowded ranks of their

enemy, and cheer after cheer pealing to heaven, in answer to the clamorous outcry of the French, as the boldest urged the others forward.

“ Nothing could check the fusileers ; they kept gradually advancing, while the incessant rolling of their musketry slaughtered the crowded sections of the French, and each moment embarrassed more and more Soult’s efforts to open out his encumbered line. The enemy’s reserve coming forward to support their comrades, was forced to the very edge of the plateau, and increased the crowd without remedying the disorder. The English volleys rolled on faster and more deadly than ever—a horrid carnage making all attempts to hold the hill vain, and thus uselessly increased an unavailing slaughter. Unable to bear the withering fire, the shattered columns of the French were no longer able to sustain themselves,*—the mass were driven over the ridge,—and trampling each other down, the shattered column sought refuge at the bottom of the hill.

“ On that bloody height stood the conquerors. From 1500 muskets a parting volley fell upon the routed column as it hurried down the height. Where was the remainder of the proud array of England, which on the morning had exceeded 6,000 combatants?—Stretched coldly in the sleep of death, or bleeding on the battle ground!”†

Thus terminated one of the bloodiest conflicts upon record ; for Godinot, perceiving that Latour Maubourg was repulsed by Lefebre’s guns and a threatened charge from Lumley’s cavalry, abandoned his efforts against the left,

* “ Few battles have ever given the contending powers so high an opinion of each other. The French exhibited the highest possible state of discipline that day : nothing could be more perfect than they were in all their movements ; no general could have wished for more excellent instruments, and no soldiers were ever directed by more consummate skill. This was more than counterbalanced by the incomparable bravery of their opponents.”—*Southey*.

† Victories of the British Armies.

and drew back from the village of Albuera. At nine o'clock the conflict commenced,—at two it closed,—and the French, under a heavy fire of artillery, retired their beaten infantry across the river, and left the field of battle to the conquerors.



CHAPTER XXII.

NIGHT OF ALBUERA—SUFFERINGS OF THE WOUNDED—HEAVY CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES—ANECDOTES—SOULT RETREATS—OBSERVATIONS ON THE BATTLE—ERRORS OF SOULT AND BERESFORD—THE INTREPIDITY OF BOTH—LORD WELLINGTON'S OPINION OF THE ACTION—AFFAIR AT USAGRE—HILL SUCCEEDS BERESFORD, WHO IS RESTORED TO HIS FORMER COMMAND—ALARMING STATE OF THE PORTUGUESE ARMY—LETTERS TO LORD LIVERPOOL AND MR. STUART.

A TEMPESTUOUS night closed the memorable day of Albuera. The rain, which during the action had fallen heavily at intervals, became more constant and severe as evening advanced; and the streams which rolled down the heights and mingled with the waters of the river, were not unfrequently observed to be deeply tinged with blood. The village of Albuera had been plundered and destroyed by the enemy,—every house was roofless,—every inhabitant had disappeared; and had there been a place of shelter near, there was neither carriage nor beast of burden by which the wounded could have been removed. Throughout the night, and during the following day, the dead and the disabled lay upon the field as they had fallen; and nothing could be more painful than the groans and complainings of the wounded. Almost every man who had escaped unhurt was needed for picket duty; and the few who remained otherwise disposable, were quite unequal to afford assistance to half the sufferers who required it. “In this cruel situation Beresford sent Colonel Hardinge to demand assistance from Blake; but wrath and mortified

pride were predominant in that general's breast, and he refused; saying it was customary with allied armies for each to take care of its own wounded;"* and he declined extending the least relief to these heroic sufferers, who, by a prodigal expenditure of their blood, had saved his sluggish legions from extermination.

That such continued and desperate fighting must cause an enormous loss may be readily imagined. Besides 2,000 Spaniards and 500 Germans and Portuguese placed *hors de combat*, the British casualties amounted to 4,407;† an enormous loss when it is remembered that little more than 6,500 English soldiers were actually on the battle ground. Almost all the field officers were killed or wounded. Houghton died, cheering his men on; and Myers‡ and Duckworth, at the heads of their respective regiments.

* Napier.

† "Return of killed, wounded, and missing, of the corps of the army under the command of Lieut.-General Viscount Wellington, K. B., under the immediate orders of Marshal Sir William Carr Beresford, K. B., in the battle with the French army commanded by Marshal Soult, at Albuera, on the 16th of May, 1811.

	Officers.	Non-comd. Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	34	33	917	63	984
Wounded	181	146	2666	35	2993
Missing	14	28	528	17	570
Total	229	207	4101	115	4547

‡ While Myers was being carried by his servants to the rear, the body of General Houghton was borne past him on a mule, to be interred at Elvas. "Upon seeing it, Sir William desired, that if he should die they would bury him on the spot. He lived, however, to reach Valverde, and till the following day. When his dissolution drew near, he desired that his ring might be taken to his sister, and that she might be told he had died like a soldier. Six of his own men bore him to the grave, and laid him under an olive tree near Valverde."—*Southey*.

Stewart, Cole, Inglis, Ellis, Blakeney, and Hawkeshaw, were wounded. Few regiments could muster in the evening a third of the number with which they went into action; and the loss sustained by the 57th—known afterwards by the sobriquet of “die-hards”—stands without a parallel. Its strength, when led into fire, was about five hundred and seventy bayonets; and its casualties, at two o’clock, were twenty-three officers, and above four hundred rank and file.*

Both armies claimed a victory; but the title rested indubitably with the allies. Soult was master of a howitzer, some stands of colours, and 500 prisoners, of whom the greater proportion rejoined their regiments within a fortnight.† Beresford remained upon the battle field, from which his assailant had been deforced, and his trophies were sad but certain attendants on success—the bodies of the slain, and numbers of maimed unfortunates, too badly wounded to bear removal. Soult’s total loss exceeded 8,000 men; and, in common with the British, the French field officers suffered heavily. Two generals were killed, and three wounded;‡ while a thousand of the enemy lay disabled on the heights; “and horrid piles of carcasses within their lines told, with dreadful eloquence, who were the conquerors.”

* “It is impossible by any description to do justice to the distinguished gallantry of the troops; but every individual most nobly did his duty, which will be well proved by the great loss we have suffered, though repulsing the enemy; and it was observed that our dead, particularly the 57th regiment, were lying as they had fought, in ranks, and every wound was in front.”—*Beresford’s Despatch to Wellington*.

† “About 300 of his prisoners were put into a convent which had been converted into a prison: they undermined the wall, and escaped with their officers at their head. The peasantry guided them, and supplied them with food on their way, and they rejoined the army in a body on the thirteenth day after the battle.”—*Southey*.

‡ “The latter fact we learned from our prisoners, who asserted that the casualties among their leaders had been such as to leave the troops in many instances at a loss from whom to receive orders; and that this circumstance, more than any other, led to the retreat from the height, and the abandonment of further operations.”—*Lord Londonderry’s Narrative*.

The banner gained from a regiment almost exterminated in its defence, confers more honour in the loss than in the acquisition. Through many a hand the English colours passed, before a single stand was obtained by the assailants. Two were picked up upon the ground—for all immediately about them were dead or dying; and several, like those “of the Buffs, were recovered, after signal heroism had been displayed in their defence. Ensign Thomas, who bore one of the flags, was surrounded, and asked to give it up. ‘Not but with my life!’ was his answer, and his life was the instant forfeit; but the standard thus taken was regained, and the manner in which it had been defended will not be forgotten when it shall be borne again to battle. Ensign Walsh, who carried the other colours, had the staff broken in his hand by a cannon ball, and fell severely wounded; but, more anxious about his precious charge than himself, he separated the flag from the shattered staff, and secured it in his bosom, from whence it was taken when his wounds were dressed after the battle.”*

It was generally expected that Soult on the next morning would have renewed the combat; and certainly, he was in every arm infinitely more effective than his opponent. The storm of war had fallen heavily on Beresford’s best troops; and though he sternly held his ground, he dreaded a second trial for which he knew his strength was quite unequal. On the evening of the 17th, a British brigade joined him by a forced march; and, on the same night, Soult sent off all his wounded men who could bear removal, to Seville, and retreated next morning by a flank march on Solano. Hamilton’s Portuguese brigade partially re-invested Badajoz; and the allied cavalry were despatched to follow the enemy with caution, as from their great inferiority no serious impression could be expected.

Albuera holds a singular character among the peninsular battles. It was a glorious display of British bravery, and a useless expenditure of British blood. On its

* Southey.

ensanguined heights the decided superiority of the "island soldiery" was established; and the high compliment was paid them by the ablest of the French marshals, that "they could not be persuaded they were beaten." *

The battle of Albuera has afforded for more than a quarter of a century a fruitful field for military controversy; and Beresford's conduct, while in command of the separate *corps d'armée* in Estremadura, has undergone an ordeal of public opinion, more remarkable for its severity than its justice. His errors have been rudely exposed—and his deserts ungenerously passed by unnoticed, or "damned with feeble praise."

There is no doubt that time was lost in the Alentejo; and when Badajoz was at last invested, that Beresford conducted his operations with a deliberative confidence, which nothing but a false security could have created. Although amply warranted by his instructions, every military consideration should have deterred him from abiding a battle at Albuera; and when the resolution was rashly taken, neither the previous dispositions were perfect, nor the after details of the action unobjectionable.

It was probably his greatest error, that to the opinions of others Beresford sacrificed his own. As was the case invariably with the Spanish commanders, Blake and Castanos were as ardent for a battle, as they were blind to the disadvantages under which an action must be fought. The British regiments were also impatient of the previous inaction in the Alentejo. Many of them as yet had never been under fire; "a burning thirst for battle was general; and Beresford had not the art either of conciliating or of exacting the confidence of his troops. It is certain that if he had retreated, a very violent and unjust clamour would

* "Soult is said to have acknowledged, that, in the whole course of his long service, he had never before seen so desperate and bloody a conflict. He is said also to have observed, 'there is no beating those troops, in spite of their generals! I always thought them bad soldiers, and now I am sure of it; for I turned their right, and penetrated their centre; they were completely beaten; he day was mine, and yet they did not know it, and would not run.'"—*Southey*.

have been raised against him ; and this was so strongly and unceremoniously represented to him by an officer on his own staff, that he gave way."*

When he yielded to these considerations, he must have been conscious that his chances of success were doubtful. It was not because the ablest of the marshals, with an army complete in every arm, and capable of executing with rapidity the most complicated evolutions, was opposed to him, that he had cause to fear ; — it was from his own troops that he had every thing to dread, on half of whom no reasonable confidence could be reposed. The Spaniards were unable to manœuvre. They were " an ill-commanded and ill-disciplined force, half-starved, half-armed, worn down by fatigue, and beaten repeatedly by the very troops they were again obliged to encounter."† Could Beresford rely upon their steadiness, when the history of all their battles told that an idle panic would disband them in an instant?‡ With such soldiers, numbers conferred no real advantage. True, they might stand to be cut down ; but if a slight change of formation would have secured the fortunes of the day, of that they were incapable. All the fury of the fight, consequently, fell upon the British brigades ; and, of necessity, their casualties were enormous.§

* Napier.

† Victories of the British Armies.

‡ " We do what we please now with the Portuguese troops : we manœuvre them under fire equally with our own, and have some dependence on them ; but these Spaniards can do nothing, but stand still ; and we consider ourselves fortunate if they do not run away."—*Wellington Despatches*.

§ " Our loss is very large ; but we must expect loss whenever we engage the British troops with the Spaniards as allies."—*Ibid*.

" The Spaniards, by all accounts, behaved remarkably well ; but they were immovable ; and their want of discipline, and of the power of manœuvring, appears to me to have created a necessity for using the British infantry in all parts of the field, and to have thrown upon us the great burden of the battle. This was exactly the case in the battle of Talavera ; and only that the Spanish troops were more distant from the fire, I suspect it was the case at the battle of Barrosa."—*Ibid*.

It was a great error of Beresford to neglect the occupation of the height in front of the right of his position,—and to that omission, the impression made by Soult upon the Spanish line is chiefly attributable. Blake's delay was embarrassing,—his subsequent conduct most perplexing,—and his obstinacy had nearly ruined the allied army. For this, no censure can attach to Beresford; and if he failed in directing Blake upon the battle ground, Wellington himself had been equally unsuccessful in managing Cuesta at Talavera.

Nor was Soult blameless in his dispositions. His opening success needed little indeed to have secured him a brilliant victory. He continued to fight in close column far too long; and when he saw his mistake, the murderous fire of the British troops in line, rendered his efforts to deploy ineffectual. “He employed the whole of Godinot's division of infantry in the attack of the village that gives its name to the battle; yet, when evacuated by Alten's brigades, it proved of no use whatever, for the battle was fought and decided on open ground, at the other extremity of the field, where an entire division of infantry would probably have turned the fate of the day.”*

The personal bravery of both generals was boundless; and both were seen throughout the day, wherever the battle raged most furiously. By voice and gestures, Soult urged his soldiers forward; and when they finally recoiled from the slaughtering volleys of the fusileers, to the last the French marshal was observed “in the battle's front,” using brave, but vain attempts to rally and renew the combat. “During the hottest of the action, Marshal Beresford exposed himself with a degree of intrepidity, which could hardly fail of spreading an example of heroism around. The person of the general-in-chief was indeed seen everywhere, a gallant soldier!”† He repeatedly dragged the Spanish officers from their ranks, compelling them to lead their men forward, and show them the way; and when

* Raoul.

† Napier.

individually charged by a Polish lancer, he grappled his adversary by the throat, threw him from his saddle, and an orderly dragoon dispatched him.

On the 21st, Lord Wellington rode over the field of battle, examined the position carefully, and expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with all that had occurred. In a letter written next day he thus makes honourable mention of the battle :—

“ You will have heard of the marshal’s action on the 16th : the fighting was desperate, and the loss of the British has been very severe ; but, adverting to the nature of the contest, and the manner in which they held their ground against all the efforts the whole French army could make against them, notwithstanding all the losses which they had sustained, I think this action one of the most glorious and honourable to the character of the troops of any that has been fought during the war.”*

In the meantime, Beresford’s advance was of necessity a slow and cautious movement. At Almendralejoz some of Soult’s wounded men fell into his hands ; and the operation was terminated on the 25th, at Usagre, by a very brilliant affair of cavalry. General Lumley having by able dispositions induced General Bron, with a brigade of heavy cavalry, to cross the river unsupported, charged with the 3d and 4th dragoon guards, assisted by a flank movement of Madden’s Portuguese, and under the fire of a troop of horse artillery. The attack was bravely executed ; and the French, driven back upon the bridge by which their companions were advancing to their assistance, were disordered and cut down, sustaining a loss of more than 200 in killed, wounded, and prisoners.

At this period of the campaign, General Hill arrived at Lisbon from England ; and Lord Wellington was enabled to

* Wellington Despatches.

restore his Portuguese command to Marshal Beresford, and reappoint Hill to the second division which illness had obliged him to resign. In consequence, "Beresford went back into Portugal to the important charge for which he was so eminently qualified, and in which he had rendered a service to the common cause of Europe, never to be mentioned without respect. Admirable as a second in command, skilful to organize a new-raised army, a good aid in battle, and personally intrepid, the marshal with all this was not popular; and therefore, perhaps, it is that the censures of his conduct in this battle have been so constantly, and with so little abatement, reiterated. However, despite all censure, his name will go down to posterity associated for ever, and that too in the relation of commander, with those unconquerable soldiers who upheld the fame of England upon the bloody field of Albuera."*

It was imperative indeed, that an effort should be made to restore the Portuguese army. The military attitude which Lord Wellington had assumed, offered a singular contrast to that of the preceding year. Then, it was questionable whether, even within the lines of Lisbon, he should have been enabled to maintain himself; now, he had expelled beyond the frontiers the last Frenchman of that splendid army, especially directed by Napoleon "to drive the leopards to the sea." One fortress had already been recovered,—another was besieged,—and, with a divided army, Wellington had fought and won two battles. Still, victories produced a heavy expenditure of human life, and increasing successes required an increase of means; but while his operations progressively extended, he found the only allies upon whom he could place reliance, deteriorate in strength and efficiency, until the diminution of the Portuguese army seemed the forerunner of its total dismemberment. The apathy and corruption of the regency showed themselves in every department; and the sad

* Sherer.

condition to which their military establishment had been reduced, will be best imagined from the perusal of two extracts from Lord Wellington's correspondence ; one addressed to Lord Liverpool, and the other to Mr. Stuart :—

“ The attention of the British government has been frequently drawn to the state of affairs in this country by the reports of Mr. Stuart and myself, particularly as that state affects the military departments and establishments ; but as the success of the military operations has recently been much impeded by the defects of constitution, by the disobedience and neglect of those employed, and by the failure of all the departments of the Portuguese army, I consider it my duty to draw your lordship's attention to the subject again in a particular manner.

“ The Portuguese troops with this part of the army do not produce in the field half of their effective strength, because the soldiers have been ill fed and taken care of ; and vast numbers of them are in hospitals. Before I broke up from the cantonments on the Rio Mayor river I took upon me to make an arrangement by which the troops serving in the same divisions with British troops should be fed by the British commissaries, of which I enclose a copy ; under which arrangement five brigades of infantry of seven doing duty in this part of the army were taken charge of, and there remained but two, and one brigade of cavalry, to be taken care of by the Portuguese departments.

“ These two brigades of infantry have been starving ever since ; and, whenever there is any call for the military service of the troops, they are obliged to call upon the British commissariat for subsistence, thus reducing the quantity for the consumption of the British divisions.

“ The Portuguese cavalry are so much reduced by want of food, that a regiment which I was desirous of employing in the recent affairs with the enemy could produce in the field only sixty men.

“ None of the Portuguese officers or troops are paid ;

and the consequence is that the officers are suffering the extremity of distress, and the soldiers desert in large numbers.

“The mules attached to the artillery, not having been fed during the winter, were unable to perform service when the army broke up from the Rio Mayor river. After having reduced the quantity of ammunition drawn with each brigade, I have lately been obliged to send away two pieces of cannon belonging to one Portuguese brigade of artillery.

“In the actions of the 3d and 5th (Fuentes d’Oñoro) the quantity of ammunition expended by the Portuguese brigade of artillery engaged, very nearly amounted to the whole quantity they carried with them; and I was obliged to have recourse to the expedient of picking up the enemy’s shot which had been fired into our camp, and of making it up into ammunition with powder and materials drawn from the British artillery.

“The reserves of Portuguese ordnance and musket ammunition are at this moment not less than six marches from the army, owing to the want of means of transport to convey them; and I have been obliged to order the commissary general to use the means of transport destined to convey provisions for soldiers and forage for horses, to bring up the Portuguese ordnance and musket ammunition.

“The Portuguese wounded soldiers are taken care of in our hospitals, as they have none of their own.

“These are facts affecting our existing situation which press upon me at the moment; and I state them to your lordship as instances of the description of inconvenience, which might amount to risk and danger, resulting from the defects, the neglects, and the ignorance of the Portuguese departments. It is obvious that no officer can venture to conduct any military operation against an active enemy with such means; and I do not scruple to acknowledge that I have felt the greatest uneasiness respecting the success of the operations which I am now carrying on, on both sides of the Tagus, in consequence of the diminution of the numbers

and of the efficiency of the Portuguese army, owing to the defects of all the departments attached to it.

* * * * *

“ My Lord, the state to which the enemy are reduced in the Peninsula may enable us to carry on our operations under all the disadvantages described in this and the enclosed letters ; but your lordship will judge for yourself of the consequences which might result from the facts which I have related. I think it proper, however, to inform your lordship that, if the enemy should be enabled to increase his force again in the Peninsula, the difficulties, which are the consequence of the defects in the Portuguese departments, will be vastly aggravated, and the danger increased to such a degree, that it may become a question whether His Majesty’s troops ought to be exposed to it.

* * * * *

“ At this moment Colonel Ashworth’s brigade, which I have ordered from Beira into Alentejo, in consequence of the battle of Albuera, are living upon the supplies of the British army. As usual, they were living from hand to mouth, generally starving, when the order to march arrived, and Sir Brent Spencer was obliged to supply them with everything to enable them to move ! This is called maintaining an army for service !! One brigade cannot move from one province to another, because the government will not supply it with food !!!

* * * * *

“ I rather imagine that you have mistaken the nature of the paper I have sent you regarding the ammunition at Coimbra. There are no troops at Coimbra ; but we were informed that there was ammunition at Coimbra for the Portuguese army in Beira, which, considering that the battle was fought on the frontier, was far enough, God knows ! But the paper which I sent to you proved that the reserve ammunition for the army was not even at Coimbra ; and if a serious battle had been fought the Portuguese troops would have had none.

“ These dignitaries of the church are always dreaming of battles; but I should like to know whether they ever dreamt that a soldier with a musket could not fight without ammunition, and that in two hours he can expend all he can carry.”

This was a sorry but it was a faithful picture of the military state of an ally, on whom so much of England's treasure had been lavished, and from whose professions so much valuable cooperation had been expected. For every reason, the insensibility of the Portuguese and Spaniards to the immense exertions made by Britain for their deliverance, was to be deplored. In other quarters, the dawning of liberty had broken. Peninsular successes had dispelled the idle belief that Napoleon was invincible; and many, on whose opinions disastrous warfare had produced despondency, in the shadows of coming events perceived the promise of a glorious consummation. None, through the darkest hours of the contest, saw more clearly than Lord Wellington, that Napoleon's was a career too brilliant and too dangerous to bear the test of human uncertainty; and—a brief period in a life—four short years, confirmed his predictions.

The sad mistakes hitherto committed by the government at home, arose from the ignorance they betrayed in the application of their means,* by frittering England's strength away in desultory and useless efforts. Even now, experience had not taught wisdom—for still these idle projects were largely entertained, and partially acted on. Instead

* Income and Expenditure of Great Britain for 1810 :—

I.—INCOME.

Ordinary Revenues.

Customs	£9,909,735
Excise	18,495,178
Stamps	5,546,082
Land and Assessed Taxes	8,011,205
Post-Office	1,471,746
Crown Lands	110,273
Lesser Sources	1,250,697

Total permanent £44,794,916

[Extraordinary y.

of consolidating her wondrous resources, Britain tried military and naval experiments here and there, incurring the danger of defeat, without having objects sufficiently important, if fortunate, to render conquest valuable. Descents upon the eastern coast of Spain had recently occupied the attention of ministers, and met a favourable consideration. To Lord Wellington however, the intended operations had been communicated, and, fortunately for the country, his marked disapprobation saved Britain the expense and mortification which attended these idle and unproductive expeditions.

Brought up	£44,794,916
<i>Extraordinary.</i>	
Customs	3,906,483
Excise	6,855,812
Property Tax	13,492,215
Lottery	471,250
Irish Loan	2,448,470
Surplus fees of officers	136,398
Loans, including 1,400,000 <i>l.</i> Irish	13,242,356
Grand total net payments	<u>£85,350,900!</u>

II.—EXPENDITURE.

Interest of National Debt, and charges of management	£21,773,227
Sinking Fund	11,660,601
Interest of Exchequer Bills	1,815,105
Civil List	1,533,110
Civil Government of Scotland	118,186
Miscellaneous	775,399
<i>Navy</i>	20,058,412
<i>Army</i>	18,536,300
<i>Ordnance</i>	4,652,331
Loans to other countries, viz.—	
<i>Sicily</i>	£425,000
<i>Portugal</i>	1,247,898
<i>Spain</i>	387,294
	<u>2,050,082</u>
Miscellaneous	2,270,867
	<u>£85,243,620</u>

"I earnestly recommend to you," he said, in his letter to Lord Liverpool, "not to undertake any of the maritime operations on the coast of Spain upon which you have desired to have my opinion. Unless you should send a very large force, you would scarcely be able to effect a landing, and maintain the situation of which you might obtain possession. Then that large force would be unable to move, or to effect any object at all adequate to the expense or to the expectation which would be formed from its strength, owing to the want of those equipments and supplies in which an army landed from its ships must be deficient.

"It is in vain to hope for any assistance, even in this way, much less military assistance, to such expeditions, from the Spaniards. The first thing they would require uniformly would be money; then arms, ammunition, clothing of all descriptions, provisions, forage, horses, means of transport,* and everything which your expedition would have a right to require from them; and, after all, this extraordinary and perverse people would scarcely allow the commander of your expedition to have a voice in the decision on the plan of operations to be followed, when the whole should be ready to undertake one.

"Depend upon it that Portugal should be the foundation of all your operations in the Peninsula, of whatever nature they may be; upon which point I have never altered

* The enormous demands made by the Spanish Junta would scarcely be credited. In one official application to Mr. Stuart, he was peremptorily required to furnish *without delay*, ten millions of dollars, five hundred thousand yards of cloth, four million yards of linen for shirts and for the hospitals, three hundred thousand pair of shoes, thirty thousand pair of boots, twelve million of cartridges, two hundred thousand muskets, twelve thousand pair of pistols, fifty thousand swords, one hundred thousand arobas of flour, besides *salt meat and fish*! The assistance rendered in return may be estimated from a postscript to one of Lord Wellington's despatches to his brother:—

"P.S. Just to show you the kind of people the Spaniards are to deal with, I mention that I cannot station even a corporal's party, or send a patrol, into the Sierra de Gata, or the Sierra de Francia, without giving the corporal money to pay for rations for the horses and men of his party, while the French take everything in the same districts for nothing."

my opinion. If they are to be offensive, and Spain is to be the theatre of them, your commanders must be in a situation to be entirely independent of all Spanish authorities; by which means alone they will be enabled to draw some resources from the country, and some assistance from the Spanish armies."

We mentioned that public opinion had undergone a change. Indeed, men could not have continued much longer blind to the growth of that controlling power on the Peninsula, which was gradually sapping Napoleon's strength, and weakening an influence hitherto paramount over Europe. This change was not the loudly-expressed display of popular exultation—that evanescent joy which a victory calls forth, and a defeat extinguishes. It was the well-grounded assurance of success, slowly and cautiously received, and hence, the more likely to be permanent. Of the whig members in the lower house, some most remarkable for their bitter opposition to the continuance of an army on the Peninsula, now saw their error, and acknowledged that they had been mistaken. Among this number was Mr. Whitbread; and with an honest and manly sincerity, that gentleman wrote to Lord Wellington, admitting his high deserts, and renouncing his own previously-expressed opinions as erroneous. At the same time, the Chancellor conveyed to him the thanks of the Lords; and in terms of similar compliment, the Speaker communicated the approbation of the House of Commons. Of these flattering testimonials, Mr. Whitbread's letter was undoubtedly the proudest offering. It was a moral triumph, achieved entirely by individual merit over the rancour of prejudice and party; and that he felt it to be such, his reply to Mr. Whitbread clearly establishes.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Elvas, 23d May, 1811.

"I was most highly gratified by your letter of the 29th April, which I received last night; and I beg leave to return my thanks for the mode in which you have taken the

trouble of informing me of the favourable change of your opinion respecting affairs in this country.

“I acknowledge that I was much concerned to find that persons, for whom I entertained the highest respect, and whose opinions were likely to have great weight in England and throughout Europe, had delivered erroneous opinions, as I thought, respecting affairs in this country; and I prized their judgments so highly, at the same time that I was certain of the error of the opinion which they had delivered, that I was induced to attribute their conduct to the excess of the spirit of party.

“I assure you that, highly as I am gratified and flattered by the approbation of — —, and yourself and others, that which gives me most pleasure in the account which I received last night from England, is to be convinced that such men could not be unjust towards an officer in the service of the country abroad; and that the opinions which they had delivered, however unfavourable to him, were the real dictates of their judgments, upon a fair view of all the circumstances which had come to their knowledge. To the gratification arising from this conviction, to one who appears destined to pass his life in the harness, you have added that which I received from your obliging letter; and I assure you that I am very sensible of the kindness towards me which induced you to write to me.”

Immediately on the arrival of the 3d and 7th divisions, the siege of Badajoz was actively resumed. On the left bank of the Guadiana the investment had been commenced by General Hamilton on the 19th. That on the right was effected on the 25th by the 7th division, under Major-General Houstoun; and on the 27th Picton forded the river above the fortress, and united the third division with the Portuguese corps already before the place.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STRENGTH OF THE ALLIES ON THE GUADIANA BUT TEMPORARY—DELAY IN BESIEGING BADAJOZ—PLAN OF THE ATTACK—THE PLACE TWICE ASSAULTED WITHOUT SUCCESS—DETAIL GIVEN TO LORD LIVERPOOL OF THE CAUSES OF HIS FAILURE BY LORD WELLINGTON—OBSERVATIONS ON THE SIEGE—MOVEMENTS OF THE FRENCH MARSHALS—THE ALLIES MARCH FROM THE AGUEDA—CAVALRY AFFAIR NEAR ESPEJA—MARMONT UNITES WITH REYNIER AT ALMAREZ—IS DELAYED IN CROSSING THE TAGUS—CONSEQUENCES WHICH MIGHT HAVE RESULTED.

THE superiority of Lord Wellington's strength upon the Guadiana, he was well aware, could be but temporary, and Badajoz must fall at once, or not at all.* The place was too important for the French to allow it to be lost without making strenuous exertions for its deliverance. Marmont, no doubt, would move with all his disposable force upon the Tagus; and Soult, more formidable than ever from the large reinforcements which had joined him, would easily effect a junction with the army of Portugal, and thus complete a magnificent "*corps d'armée*," too powerful in every arm for any thing which Lord Wellington could oppose to it.

Nor could the siege be immediately commenced. The battering-train had been injured so much in its hasty removal to Elvas, that by the engineer's report, eleven days

* "We break ground at Badajoz to-morrow, and we hope to get the place in a few days. If we do not succeed in a few days, we shall not succeed at all, as the seventeen or nineteen battalions, and some cavalry of the ninth corps, are on their march to join Soult, and I think will join him the second week in June."—*Letter to Mr. H. Wellesley, Elvas, 29th May, 1811.*

would be necessary to repair the carriages, and render the guns serviceable.

The plan adopted by Lord Wellington was similar to that pursued by Marshal Beresford, but the means of aggression were increased, and counter-batteries, armed with guns and mortars, were erected to keep down the fire of the place. Both San Christoval and the castle were to be attacked at the same time; and the siege artillery was thus distributed:—

Attack of San Christoval.

24-pounders	12
16-pounders	4
10-inch howitzers	2
8-inch ditto	4
24-pounders in reserve, brass .	4

Attack of the Castle.

24-pounders	14
8-inch howitzers	4
10-inch ditto	2

The 24-pounders were supplied with 600 rounds a gun; the 16-pounders with 300; the 8-inch howitzers with 350 shells each; and the 10-inch with 200. The wheels of the howitzers were taken off, and the carriages placed on the ground, so as to fire at an elevation of thirty degrees in place of mortars. “ Since the last operation, a convoy of stores had arrived at Elvas from Alcacer do Sal; and there were now conveyed to depôts, close to the two attacks, 3,500 entrenching tools, 60,000 sand bags, 600 gabions, 600 fascines, a liberal supply of splinter-proof timber, platforms and plank, and all the carpenters’ and miners’ tools and small stores received from Lisbon.”*

Limited in time, and crippled in every thing required for carrying a siege through, Lord Wellington endeavoured to overcome by energy and daring, disadvantages from which

* Jones’s Journal of Sieges.

others would have shrunk at once. On the 3d, his batteries opened. On the 6th, San Christoval was assaulted without success. Again, upon the evening of the 9th, the trial was made and proved unfortunate; and on the 10th the siege was raised.

The details of his failure are thus given in an official letter addressed to Lord Liverpool, as remarkable for its clearness as its candour.

“ MY LORD,

“ *Quinta de Granicha*, 13th June, 1811.

“ In consequence of a report from the chief engineer, Lieut.-Colonel Fletcher, that the fire from San Christoval might occasion the loss of many lives in the operations on the left of the Guadiana, and the breach in that outwork having been apparently much improved by the fire throughout the 6th, I directed that an attempt might be made to carry San Christoval by storm that night. Major-General Houstoun, who conducted the operations of the siege on the right of the Guadiana, accordingly ordered a detachment under Major Macintosh, of the 85th regiment, to make the attempt. The men advanced under a very heavy fire of musketry and hand grenades from the outworks, and of shot and shells from the town, with the utmost intrepidity, and in the best order, to the bottom of the breach; the advanced guard being led by Ensign Dyas, of the 51st regiment, who volunteered to perform this duty; but they found that the enemy had cleared the rubbish from the bottom of the escarp; and, notwithstanding that they were provided with ladders, it was impossible to mount it.* They retired with some loss.

* “ The fort was evidently weakly manned, and the garrison not having yet brought any very destructive fire on the assailants, the officers considered the opportunity favourable for an attempt to force in by escalade, and directed twelve ladders of 15 feet in length, which had been supplied with the view of aiding in mounting the breach, to be employed against the scarp wall. The scarp being more than 20 feet in height the attempt proved abortive: other points of less height were sought, and the ladders were applied in vain to almost

“ The fire upon San Christoval, as well as upon the place, continued on the 7th, 8th, and 9th, on which day the breach in the wall of San Christoval appeared practicable; and I directed that a second attempt should be made on that night to obtain possession of that outwork. Major-General Hustoun ordered another detachment for this service, under the command of Major-M‘Geechy, of the 17th Portuguese regiment, who, with the officers destined to command the different parties composing the detachment, had been employed throughout the 8th and 9th in reconnoitring the breach and the different approaches to it.

“ They advanced at about nine at night, in the best order, though opposed by the same means, and with the same determination as had been opposed to the detachment which had made the attempt on the 6th.

“ Ensign Dyas again led the service, and the storming party arrived at the foot of the breach; but they found it impossible to mount it, the enemy having again cleared the rubbish from the bottom of the escarp. The detachment suffered considerably, and Major M‘Geechy, the commanding officer, was unfortunately killed, and others of the officers fell; but the troops continued to maintain their station till Major-General Hustoun ordered them to retire.*

every face and flank of the work. The garrison showered down upon the assaulting party shells, hand-grenades, stones, &c. in overwhelming quantities for an hour, in which these impracticable attempts were persevered in. At one o’clock, A.M. the residue of the party retired, having lost 12 killed and 90 wounded. Lieutenant Forster, at the close of the combat, received a shot through the body, of which he died.”—*Jones’s Journal of Sieges.*

* “ Every one who succeeded in reaching the parapet was instantly bayoneted down; and the garrison, after a little while mounting on the parapet, upset the ladders. At this time the two assaulting columns were completely mixed together, and united in many strenuous endeavours to replace the ladders at various points of the front; but the enormous quantity of large shells, hand-grenades, bags of powder and combustibles, which the garrison threw into the ditch, rendered their perseverance and gallantry unavailing; and after braving destruction till ten P.M., and having 40 men killed and 100 wounded, the remainder of the assaulting party was ordered to retire.”—*Ibid.*

“When the reinforcements had arrived from the frontier of Castille, after the battle of Albuera, I undertook the siege of Badajoz, entertaining a belief that the means of which I had the command would reduce the place before the end of the second week in June, at which time I expected that the reinforcement for the enemy’s southern army, detached from Castille, would join Marshal Soult. I was unfortunately mistaken in my estimate of the quality of those means.

“The ordnance belonging to the garrison of Elvas is very ancient and incomplete; unprovided with the improvements adopted by modern science to facilitate and render more certain the use of cannon; and although classed generally as 24-pounders, the guns were found to be of a calibre larger than the shot in the garrison of that weight. The fire from this ordnance was therefore very uncertain, and the carriages proved to be worse even than we supposed they were; and both guns and carriages were rendered useless so frequently by the effect of our own fire as to create delay, in consequence of the necessity which existed for exchanging both in the advanced batteries.*

“Those who are accustomed to observe the effect of the fire of artillery, will be astonished to learn that fire was kept up from the 2d to the 10th instant from fourteen 24-

* “The number of pieces of ordnance disabled during the siege was as follows:—

	24-pounder guns.		10-inch howitzers.	8 inch howitzers.	General Total.
	Iron.	Brass.			
Disabled by the fire of the enemy	1	2	..	3	II
Ditto by their own fire	15	2	1	18
Total	I	17	2	4	24

being eighteen guns and six howitzers rendered unserviceable—and the vent of the other thirteen brass 24-pounders being much enlarged and in a very bad state.”—*Journal of Sieges.*

pounders, upon the wall of the castle of Badajoz, constructed of rammed earth and loose stones, of which the foot was seen at the distance of from 400 to 600 yards, and that it had not at last effected a practicable breach. It was impossible to estimate the length of time which would elapse before a practicable breach could have been effected in this wall; and, even if one had been effected, it was the opinion of the engineers and others, as well as my own, that although the breach could have been stormed, we could not have formed our troops to attack the enemy's intrenchment within, unless we had possession of Fort San Christoval.

"We had failed in two attempts to obtain possession of Fort San Christoval, and it was obvious to me that we could not obtain possession of that outwork, without performing a work which would have required the labour of several days to accomplish it.

"On the morning of the 10th instant I received an intercepted despatch, from the Duke of Dalmatia to the Duke of Ragusa, which pointed out clearly the enemy's design to collect in Estremadura their whole force; and I had reason to believe that Bonet's corps, which had marched from Toledo on the 28th and 29th of May, and was expected at Cordova on the 5th and 6th instant, would have joined the southern army by the 10th; and it was generally expected in the country that the southern army would have moved by that time.

"The movement of this army alone would have created a necessity for raising the siege; but on the same morning I received accounts from the frontiers of Castille, which left no doubt of the destination of the army of Portugal to the southward, and gave ground for belief that they would arrive at Merida on the 15th instant.

"I therefore ordered that the siege should be raised.

"I am concerned to add that this measure was rendered expedient, not only by the military considerations to which I have above referred, but by others relative to the security of Elvas.

“ If the siege had been continued only for two days longer there would have remained at Elvas only 10,000 24-pound shot ; a quantity by no means sufficient for its defence, if the course of events should enable the enemy to attack that place ; and I learn that there are none at Lisbon, and if there were any, the government, under present circumstances, have not the power of procuring means of transport to send it up.

“ Since the troops under Sir William Beresford have been in this part of the country, General Hamilton’s division of Portuguese troops, consisting of three brigades, had been supplied with provisions generally from the stores of Elvas, as well as the troops of the garrison ; and the stores of Elvas had been very inadequately, if at all, upheld to answer these demands.

“ The consequence is, that there are not at this moment in the fort supplies for the garrison for one fortnight.

“ All the means of transport which could be collected in this neighbourhood were employed in aid of the operations of the siege, from which they could not be relieved till the siege should be raised, and the ordnance and stores returned to Elvas.

“ The application of these means of transport, to bring a supply to Elvas from the British magazines at Abrantes (which is the resource from which at last it must be drawn), and the eventual safety of that place required an early discontinuance of the operations against Badajoz ; and this, independent of the circumstances above referred to, and the military considerations resulting from them, was a principal motive with me for raising the siege on the 10th instant.

“ From this circumstance your lordship will see additional reason to lament the state of inefficiency of all the Portuguese departments attached to the army. It affords an additional proof of the embarrassments which meet me at every turn, from wants and deficiencies for which the Portuguese government ought to provide, but which invariably

at last fall, at the most critical moments, upon the resources which have been provided, with great difficulty and labour, and at great expense, by the departments of the British army.

“I have every reason to be satisfied with the conduct of all the officers and troops employed at the siege of Badajoz, whose labours and exertions deserved a very different result.

* * * * *

“I enclose a return of the killed and wounded throughout the siege,* from which your lordship will observe that, excepting in the attempts to obtain possession of San Christoval, our loss has not been severe. We still maintain the blockade of Badajoz; and I know from an intercepted letter, that the enemy had in the place, on the 28th of May, only three weeks’ provisions.”

That the siege of Badajoz should fail, was an event for which Lord Wellington was prepared; and his official correspondence shows that the result of the attempt was always considered by himself as more than doubtful. He had few attached to the army who knew aught of engineering. Sappers and miners he had none, and a large proportion of

* “Return of killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of Lieut.-General Lord Viscount Wellington, K.B., in the several affairs with the French army, from the 30th of May to the 11th of June, 1811, inclusive.

	Officers.	Non-comd. Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	9	3	106	—	118
Wounded	22	17	315	—	354
Missing	3	—	0	—	9
Total	34	20	427	—	481

his gunners were Portuguese, men full of zeal and gallantry, but sadly wanting in experience. "The ordnance employed at this siege, besides being of an excessively bad quality, was also totally inadequate in quantity to the reduction of such a fortress as Badajoz, although every thing Elvas could supply was drawn from that garrison. The guns, it has been stated, were of brass, false in their bore, and already worn by previous service, and the shot were of all shapes and diameters, giving a windage from one tenth to half an inch. The howitzers used as mortars were defective equally with the guns: their chambers were all of unequal size, the shells did not fit the bore, and their beds were unsteady; so that the practice was necessarily vague and uncertain, and they proved of little value."*

Few as the engineers were, they needed the commonest means to have rendered their services efficient.† Their implements were of the worst quality; and as Phillipon had scarp'd the rock bare before San Christoval, "the stony surface required a supply of earth and woolpacks, to form an artificial covering for the engineers and fatigue parties; while the workmen were exposed to the fire of several sixteen and eighteen-inch mortars, which threw their enormous shells with a precision that threatened ruin to everything within their range."‡

That Badajoz was besieged contrary to the rules of obsolete warfare must be conceded. It is a military maxim that a siege, provided there be time and means, is the only certain operation which a general can engage in. Wellington

* Jones's Journals of Sieges.

† "The skill displayed belonged to particular persons, rather than to the corps at large; and the very tools with which they worked, especially those sent from the storekeeper's department, were so shamefully bad that the work required could scarcely be performed; the captured French cutting-tools were eagerly sought for by the engineers as being infinitely better than the British; and when the soldiers' lives and the honour of England's arms were at stake, the English cutlery was found worse than the French."—*Napier*.

‡ Victories of the British Armies.

failed because he wanted both ; but even that failure enhanced his reputation. An officer,* probably more competent than any to estimate Lord Wellington's plans and prospects of success, thus offers his opinion.

"The most critical examination of the operations of this siege will not allow of blame for its failure being thrown on any one. From the general to the soldier each did his duty ; nor should want of success discredit the original project. It must be admitted that there was a judicious application of all the means that could be collected for the reduction of Christoval. On trial those means proved insufficient ; many of the causes of their insufficiency could not have been foreseen, and others, if foreseen, could not have been remedied ; all that skill and bravery could effect was done.

* * * * *

"Such part of it as was carried through augured favourably for the remainder, and a candid consideration will, perhaps, grant that this attempt to recover Badajoz, although bold and hazardous in the extreme, and contrary to all rule, had much merit as a feasible expedient, and deserved a happier result."

In the meantime the movements of the French marshals were clearly developed. The flank position taken by the Duke of Dalmatia at Llerena, had always convinced Lord Wellington that Badajoz was his dearest object, and that he only waited for reinforcements to assume an offensive attitude on the Guadiana. On the 14th Drouet joined Soult, and both generals moved forward to Fuente del Maestro, while Hill with the covering army took post on the heights of Albuera. Marmont simultaneously commenced his operations, by despatching Regnier with two divisions through the pass of Banos, while with the remainder of his corps d'armée he advanced to Ciudad Rodrigo, protecting an immense convoy destined for the use of that fortress.

* Colonel Jones, R.E.

Lord Wellington, in consequence, issued orders for the divisions behind the Agueda* to move towards the Tagus by correspondent routes, should the Duke of Ragusa make that river the object of his march, or take up the line of the Coa, if assailed; and should the French marshal threaten Almeida, Spencer had instructions to ruin the works, and dismantle the fortress. This latter order was rather hastily executed by General Pack; and Spencer retired on the 6th, when Marmont issued from Rodrigo in two columns, one marching on Gallegos, and the other on Espeja. "The light division fell back before the latter, and Slade's cavalry before the former; but in this retrograde movement, the latter gave its flank obliquely to the line of the enemy's advance, which soon closed upon, and cannonaded it, with eight pieces of artillery. Unfortunately the British rear-guard got jammed in between the French and a piece of marshy ground, and in this situation the whole must have been destroyed, if Captain Purvis, with a squadron of the fourth dragoons, had not charged the enemy, while the other troopers, with strong horses and a knowledge of the firmest parts, got through the marsh. Purvis then passed also, and the French horses could not follow. Thus the retreat was effected with a loss of only twenty men."†

Marmont's true line of march was the Tagus; and while Regnier directed his route by the passes of Banos and Bejar, the French marshal moved through that of Perales, and the whole united at the bridge of Almaraz. But here an unexpected delay occurred. The pontoons had not reached the Tagus from Madrid, and the passage of the entire corps d'armée was accomplished by a solitary ferry-boat. Four days were thus consumed, a period sufficiently long to have enabled Lord Wellington to reduce Badajoz had his siege artillery remained serviceable; and the accidental circumstance of his gun-metal being composed of

* First, fifth, sixth, and light divisions, and a brigade of cavalry.

† Napier.

Portuguese brass* instead of British iron, robbed his daring efforts of success, and preserved a fortress for Napoleon.

* The first siege of Badajoz by the English being attempted with forty bronze cannon of Portuguese construction, the whole were rendered unserviceable in a very short space of time, though loaded with powder not more than one-third of the weight of the balls, and discharged at the moderate rate of once only in eight minutes; and the siege miscarried. The English attributed the quick deterioration of the cannon to the strength of their powder, and consequently they determined to have no parks but such as were composed of cast-iron cannon from England."—*Thiery*.





Lynedock

CHAPTER XXIV.

LORD WELLINGTON HALTS AT ALBUERA—TAKES AFTERWARDS A POSITION ON THE CAYA—STRENGTH OF THE RIVAL ARMIES—THE FRENCH MARSHALS SEPARATE—BLAKE'S OPERATIONS FAIL—LETTER TO THE HON. HENRY WELLESLEY—HEAD QUARTERS CHANGED TO PORTALEGRE—DEFEAT OF LORCA—WELLINGTON BLOCKADES RODRIGO; AND THE FRENCH ARMIES UNITE TO RELIEVE THE PLACE—DESPATCH TO LORD LIVERPOOL—POSITION OF FUENTE GUINALDO—AFFAIRS OF EL BODON AND ALDEA DA PONTE—CASUALTIES OF THE ALLIES ON THE 25TH AND 27TH OF SEPTEMBER.

THE advance of the Duke of Dalmatia confirmed Wellington's resolution of remaining at Albuera to the last moment that prudence would warrant, in the hope that he might succeed in bringing Soult to action, before he could receive assistance from Marmont, who had reached Truxillo on the 14th. The caution of the French marshal, however, was extreme; and on the 17th, the allies recrossed the Guadiana, taking a position on the Caya, while, on the 19th, the enemy introduced their convoys into Badajoz; and that fortress, when reduced to great extremity, was a second time abundantly replenished with provisions, and all the munitions of war.

The position of the allies was chosen with admirable judgment. It embraced a surface of scarcely four leagues, the right extending to the lower bridge of the Caya, and the left appuied upon the heights over the Gevora, and protected by the fortress of Campo Mayor. The nature of the ground effectually masked the dispositions of the allied brigades from observation by the enemy, while excellent communications enabled Lord Wellington to move the

mass of his army with celerity on any threatened point; and from the flatness of the country round Badajoz, any hostile movement was discernible from Fort La Lippe and the numerous watch towers which stud the Portuguese frontier.

It was necessary, indeed, that the strength of his position should compensate for Lord Wellington's numerical inferiority. The united army in his front outnumbered him in every arm, comprising 63,000 infantry, 7,500 cavalry, and 90 pieces of cannon; consequently the allied general was weaker in infantry by 10,000, while in cavalry and artillery the French marshals exceeded him nearly by one half.

The opinion in the British camp was general, that a battle must be fought, and on the morning of the 24th the movements of the enemy tended to confirm this belief. Their cavalry and horse artillery crossed the Guadiana in two heavy columns, the right being directed towards Campo Mayor, and the left on Elvas. Although the allied divisions got immediately under arms, their masses were never exposed to view; and Soult and Marmont, after manœuvring in front of the position until evening, ended their unsatisfactory reconnaissance and withdrew. The right column had been steadily and successfully checked by the English and Portuguese heavy cavalry, but on the left, the enemy had better fortune; a squadron of the 11th light dragoons was lost through the inexperience of their commanding officer, and the 2d German hussars driven in great confusion into Elvas, raising the casualties on this occasion to more than one hundred and fifty men.*

For a month the French marshals remained together; their numerous cavalry scouring the face of the country to an immense extent, and wasting it of everything that was

* The French cavalry were mistaken, from a general similarity in their appearance, for Portuguese dragoons. "The absurd fancy indulged in at home, of imitating foreign patterns in clothing the cavalry, led to numerous mistakes; while it greatly embarrassed officers, in ascertaining correctly whether troops, when at a trifling distance, were in reality friends or foes."—*Victories*, &c.

convertible into sustenance for either men or horses. At last, these precarious supplies failed altogether; and Soult and Marmont retired from Estremadura,—the latter marching northwards, and the former falling back upon Seville.

When the marshals separated, Soult left the 5th corps under the command of Girard, with Marmont; and the latter moved by the valley of the Tagus, and established his head quarters at Salamanca, occupying Truxillo and Plasencia, each with a division, and securing by military posts the passes of Bejar and Banos. Girard was cantoned at Zafra, and the northern army directed to cooperate with that of Portugal, when an opportunity of striking at Lord Wellington should present itself. Napoleon had planned the mode in which the future operations of these armies should be conducted; and when Dorsenne succeeded Bassieres, he received instructions from the Emperor to concert measures with Marmont, and act vigorously with their combined forces against the allies.

A strange fatality appeared still to influence the Spanish efforts in the field. Blake had urged Lord Wellington to remain beyond the Guadiana, but past experience had shown how little “twelve thousand Spaniards and an uneasy colleague” would assist, if a battle with the united corps d’armée of Soult and Marmont should result. Accordingly the Spanish general was allowed to act by himself, and an operation easy of execution, and important if effected, was suggested by Lord Wellington, and undertaken. Blake was to march rapidly down the right bank of the Guadiana, recross the river at Mertola, and obtain possession of Seville and its important magazines, then but weakly defended, and if lost, involving the entire support by which the blockade of Cadiz was maintained. But the expedition was a wretched failure. Blake amused himself by investing the castle of Niebla, without artillery; and consequently, poor as the place was, he was forced from it with some loss, while Soult immediately crossed the Sierra Morena, and secured Seville from any future effort.

Blake, by a miracle, escaped to Cadiz, while Ballasteros, with some trifling changes of fortune, maintained a mountain warfare for a few months, but finally embarked at Camelas, and terminated the struggle in the Condado de Niebla.

There, and in the Ronda mountains, a powerful diversion could have been originated. There Spanish armies might, it was believed, have been entrusted to their own management; and allies, worse than useless with his army, have proven to Lord Wellington of inestimable value by themselves. That he thought so, may be inferred from an extract of a letter addressed to the Right Hon. Henry Wellesley, and dated 20th July, 1811:—

“ In my opinion, the most interesting points at present in Spain, are the Sierra de Ronda and the Condado de Niebla. The former, if the Spaniards should be obliged to act alone, is the fittest scene of their operations, and they would always have a retreat upon Gibraltar: the latter, if they are to combine their operations with ours, is the best, because the communication is shorter and more certain, and they would have a secure retreat into Portugal. In either case they could be supplied with facility from Cadiz, or they could be drawn thither if the enemy were to prepare for a serious attack upon that position.

“ A corps of 10,000 or 12,000 men, well equipped, in the Sierra de Ronda, or the Condado de Niebla, would be a thorn in the enemy's side, to which he must pay attention; would be an effectual diversion for our operations; and, if in the latter, would be ready either to join us through Portugal, or to march upon Seville, if we should be able, in a later period of the season, to make another attack upon Badajoz. It may be depended upon that, if the allies can only get hold of Seville for a few hours, the enemy must raise the siege of Cadiz; and therefore it would appear most desirable for the Spaniards to turn their attention seriously to that object. But it must be *seriously*.

It must be attempted with a corps of 10,000 or 12,000 men, well equipped with what is necessary to obtain success, and in some degree disciplined; and, if they once make such an establishment in one of those quarters, not only is their retreat secure, but the enemy must attend to them, or must give up Seville and the siege of Cadiz.

“This is the object I had in view when I proposed to General Blake to go to the Condado de Niebla, when he declined to join himself to us, after the last siege of Badajoz. But he has since embarked, and he looks to other objects, which are quite impracticable, as he may depend upon it are all offensive operations with the Spanish troops in their existing state; and he will find that not only they are impracticable, but that he removes himself and his troops from the real scene of action, in which he might be of some use, if he would remain quiet.

“I have not talked with Castaños or anybody upon this plan. The truth is, that it is impossible for any rational man to talk to any of them. They are visionaries and enthusiasts, who will not look at things as they really are; and, although they cannot be ignorant of the truth of all we say of the miserably inefficient state of their army, they talk and act as if it was an army, till some dreadful disaster happens, and they are highly offended if in any discussion the truth, which ought never to be concealed in such a discussion, is even hinted.”

The recession of the French armies produced an immediate change in the positions of the allies; and Lord Wellington, leaving Hill in the Alentejo in observation of Girard, changed his head-quarters from the Quinta de St. Joaô to Portalegre, and subsequently to Fuente Guinaldo. The occupation of the line of the Coa was highly desirable; it placed the posts and villages in the more immediate vicinity of Ciudad Rodrigo in the possession of the allied commander, and thus cut off all casual supplies from a fortress, already straitened by the guerillas of

Julian Sanchez, and separated from its covering army by a space of fifty miles. In fact, Rodrigo was the object at which Lord Wellington had secretly aimed; and measures had been taken to get up a powerful siege train from Lisbon, and forward all necessary arrangements for the immediate reduction of a fortress, which he justly considered, in a military point of view, to be invaluable.

But the period had not arrived when Rodrigo could be attacked. In Catalonia, Suchet's operations had been eminently successful, and Tarragona had fallen on the 28th of June by assault. Abadia, who had succeeded Santocildas in the command of the Spanish forces in Galicia, was unable to oppose Count Dorsenne; and to save his army, he sought refuge in the strong passes of Villa Franca. Blake was not equally fortunate. Having joined the Murcian army under Friere, the reinforcement he brought from Cadiz increased the united force to more than 20,000 men. But the career of this army was brief indeed. Soult with his customary activity hurried to meet it, encountered it at Baza, drove it in confusion towards Lorca, where he finally cut the line of retreat, and totally dispersed it. Murcia was thus left completely at the mercy of the French marshal. But the dread of disease effected for the Spaniards what their arms could not accomplish. Yellow fever was raging at Carthagena, and the horror of contagion induced Soult to suspend further operations, and return to Grenada. In the mean time, the strength of the French generals was hourly increasing; for between the middle of July and the end of September, 50,000 fresh troops had entered Spain, of whom above 8000 were cavalry, and all veteran soldiers. All these circumstances rendered any offensive movement of Lord Wellington a most dangerous experiment; and accordingly, he announced to Lord Liverpool, that he had abandoned the intention he had previously communicated of engaging in a siege.

"I am almost certain," he says, "I shall not be able to attack Ciudad Rodrigo, and I think it is doubtful whether

I shall be able to maintain the blockade of that place. However, I shall not give up my intention until I am certain that the enemy are too strong for me in an action in the field. The place, although weak in itself, and though the ground on which it stands is badly occupied, (the French have improved it in some degree,) is in the best chosen position of any frontier fortress that I have ever seen. It is impossible to do anything against it, either in the way of siege or blockade, excepting by crossing the Agueda; and of all the ravines that I have ever seen this is the most difficult to cross, excepting close to the fort; and in winter it cannot be crossed at all, excepting at the bridges, of which the only practicable one for carriages is under the guns of the fort. We must fight the battle, therefore, to maintain this blockade, with our backs to this river, over which we should have to retire in case of check: and this would be an awkward position, in which I ought not to involve the army, unless the numbers are so nearly equal as to render success probable. You will observe that these circumstances all favoured the French, when they attacked the place from Spain.

“However, there is one thing very clear, that if we cannot maintain this blockade, the enemy must bring 50,000 men to oblige us to raise it; and they can undertake nothing else this year, for they must still continue to watch this place, and we shall so far save the cause. In the meantime, if they offer me a favourable opportunity of bringing any of them to action, I shall do it.”

The consequences Lord Wellington expected to result from his presence on the frontier were speedily realized. While he remained upon the Coa, the efforts of the French marshals were completely paralyzed; and, with immense means, they found themselves unable to effect commensurate objects, because these means were not disposable. Distant services they dared not undertake; for if they ventured to detach troops, they feared, with good reason, that Ciudad Rodrigo would be instantly besieged;

and unless the blockade could be broken, and supplies safely and speedily introduced, the place could not hold out for any length of time. To effect the latter, a grand junction of the armies under Marmont, Souhaur, and Dorsenne was determined; and having collected large convoys at Plasencia and Salamanca, the united force assembled at Tamamers on the 22d, having previously apprized the governor of Rodrigo that the fortress would be relieved.*

This junction of the French corps produced a magnificent army. Their total strength was over sixty thousand men, of which the cavalry might be reckoned at nearly seven thousand, and the artillery comprised one hundred and ten guns. A finer army for its numbers was never ranged beneath the eagles of Napoleon; for all the reinforcements were veteran soldiers, and of these a large proportion had been detached from the Imperial Guard.

Lord Wellington, perfectly aware of the object, but not exactly of the force by which it would be effected, concentrated his divisions, as far as the locality of the country would allow. Determined that the fortress should not be relieved, excepting by an army numerically superior, and anxious to see the amount of a force, of which so many conflicting accounts had reached him, he made his dispositions accordingly.† Of these, and the immediate occur-

* "Both armies are employed in collecting supplies of provisions; and I enclose the deciphered copy of a letter in cipher, from General Montbrun to the governor of Ciudad Rodrigo, from which it appears that it is the enemy's intention to endeavour to introduce large supplies of provisions into Ciudad Rodrigo from the side of Plasencia, as well as from that of Salamanca. The dates being all in cipher, and not having been able to discover that part of the key, we do not know exactly on what day the operation is to commence, but I should imagine about the 20th or 21st.

"From what I have stated to your Lordship in former despatches regarding the enemy's strength, and the difficulties and risks attending any operation on the right of the Agueda, you will not have expected that I should be able to prevent the introduction of this convoy into Ciudad Rodrigo."—*Fuente Guinaldo*, 18th Sept. 1811.

† "I propose, therefore, to keep the allied army in such a situation as long

rences, than which no peninsular events were more exciting, and none certainly so momentous, his own plain statement to Lord Liverpool will convey the clearest details.—

“ *Quadragesis*, 29th Sept. 1811.

“ The enemy commenced their movements towards Ciudad Rodrigo with the convoys of provisions from the Sierra de Bejar and from Salamanca on the 21st instant, and on the following day I collected the British army in positions, from which I could either advance or retire without difficulty, and which would enable me to see all that was going on, and the strength of the enemy's army.

“ The 3d division, and that part of Major-Gen. Alten's brigade of cavalry which was not detached, occupied the range of heights which are on the left of the Agueda: having their advanced guard under Lieut.-Colonel Williams, of the 60th, on the heights of Pastores, within three miles of Ciudad Rodrigo; the 4th division was at Fuente Guinaldo, where I had strengthened a position with some works; the Light division on the right of the Agueda, having their right resting upon the mountains which separate Castille and Estremadura. Lieut.-General Graham commanded the troops on the left of the army, which were posted on the Lower Azava; the 6th division, and Major-General Anson's brigade of cavalry, being at Espeja, and occupying Carpio, Marialva, &c.

“ Don Carlos de España observed the Lower Agueda with Don Julian Sanchez's cavalry and infantry.

“ Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton, with Major-General Slade's and Major-General De Grey's brigades of cavalry, were on the Upper Azava, in the centre, between the right and left of the army, with General Pack's brigade

as I can, as that I may see the enemy, and form an opinion of their strength from a view of them when collected.

“ If I should not be able to prevent the introduction of the convoy, I shall at least have had the satisfaction of obliging the enemy to collect all their troops for the purpose of escorting it, and thus of contributing to save the army and the kingdom of Galicia.”—*Ibid.*

had marched with the cavalry from Ciudad Rodrigo, were brought up to the attack on the road of Fuente Guinaldo, and seeing that they would arrive and be engaged before the troops could arrive either from Guinaldo or El Bodon, I determined to withdraw our post, and to retire with the whole on Fuente Guinaldo. The 2d batt. 5th regiment, and the 77th regiment, were formed into one square, and the 21st Portuguese regiment into another, supported by Major-General Alten's small body of cavalry and the Portuguese artillery.

"The enemy's cavalry immediately rushed forward and obliged our cavalry to retire to the support of the Portuguese regiment; and the 5th and 77th regiments were charged on three faces of the square by the French cavalry, but they halted and repulsed the attack with the utmost steadiness and gallantry. We then continued the retreat, and joined the remainder of the 3d division, also formed in squares, on their march to Fuente Guinaldo, and the whole retired together in the utmost order, and the enemy never made another attempt to charge any of them; but were satisfied with firing upon them with their artillery, and with following them.

"Lieut.-Colonel Williams with his light infantry, and Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. R. Trench with the 74th regiment, retired from Pastores across the Agueda; and thence marched by Robleda, where they took some prisoners, and recrossed the Agueda, and joined at Guinaldo in the evening.

"I placed the 3d and 4th divisions, and General Pack's brigade of infantry, and Major-General Alten's, Major-General De Grey's, and Major-General Slade's brigades of cavalry, in the position at Fuente Guinaldo on the evening of the 25th, and ordered Major-General R. Craufurd to retire with the Light division across the Agueda, the 7th division to form at Albergueria, and Lieut.-General Graham to collect the troops under his command at Nave d'Aver, keeping only posts of observation on the Azava; and the

troops were thus formed in an échellon, of which the centre was in the position at Guinaldo; and the right upon the pass of Perales; and the left at Nave d'Aver; Don Carlos de España was placed on the left of the Coa; and Don Julian Sanchez was detached with the cavalry to the enemy's rear.

“ The enemy brought up a second division of infantry from Ciudad Rodrigo in the afternoon of the 25th; and in the course of that night, and of the 26th, they collected their whole army in front of our position at Guinaldo; and not deeming it expedient to stand their attack in that position, I retired about three leagues, and on the 27th formed the army as follows: viz., the 5th division on the right, at Aldea Velha; the 4th, and light dragoons, and Major-General Alten's cavalry, at the Convent of Sacaparte, in front of Alfayates; the 3d and 7th divisions in second line, behind Alfayates; and Lieut.-General Graham's corps on the left, at Bismula, having their advanced guard beyond the Villar Mayor river; and Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton's cavalry near Alfayates, on the left of the 4th division, and having General Pack's and General M'Mahon's brigades at Rebolosa, on their left. The pickets of the cavalry were in front of Aldea da Ponte, beyond the Villar Mayor river; and those of General Alten's brigade beyond the same river, towards Forcalhos.

“ It had been the enemy's intention to turn the left of the position of Guinaldo, by moving a column into the valley of the Upper Azava, and thence ascending the heights in the rear of the position by Castillejos; and from this column they detached a division of infantry and fourteen squadrons of cavalry to follow our retreat by Albergueria, and another body of the same strength followed us by Forcalhos. The former attacked the pickets of the cavalry at Aldea da Ponte, and drove them in; and they pushed on nearly as far as Alfayates. I then made General Pakenham attack them with his brigade of the 4th division, supported by Lieut.-General the

Hon. L. Cole, and the 4th division, and by Sir Stapleton Cotton's cavalry; and the enemy were driven through Aldea da Ponte, back upon Albergueria, and the pickets of the cavalry resumed their station.

“ But the enemy, having been reinforced by the troops which marched from Forcalhos, again advanced, about sunset, and drove in the pickets of the cavalry from Aldea da Ponte, and took possession of the village.

“ Lieut.-General Cole again attacked them with a part of General Pakenham's brigade, and drove them through the village; but night having come on, and as General Pakenham was not certain what was passing on his flanks, or of the numbers of the enemy—and he knew that the army were to fall back still further—he evacuated the village, which the enemy occupied and held during the night.

“ On the 28th, I formed the army on the heights behind Soito; having the Serra de Meras on their right, and the left at Rendo, on the Coa; about a league in rear of the position which they had occupied on the 27th. The enemy also retired from Aldea da Ponte, and had their advanced posts at Albergueria; and as it appears that they are about to retire from this part of the country, and as we have already had some bad weather, and may expect more at the period of the equinoctial gales, I propose to canton the troops in the nearest villages to the position which they occupied yesterday.

“ I cannot conclude this report of the occurrences of the last week, without expressing to your Lordship my admiration of the conduct of the troops engaged in the affairs of the 25th instant. The conduct of the 2d batt. 5th regiment, commanded by Major Ridge, in particular, affords a memorable example of what the steadiness and discipline of the troops, and their confidence in their officers, can effect in the most difficult and trying situations. The conduct of the 77th regiment, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Bromhead, was equally good, and I have never seen

a more determined attack than was made by the whole of the enemy's cavalry, with every advantage of the assistance of a superior artillery, and repulsed by these two weak battalions. I must not omit also to report the good conduct, on the same occasion, of the 21st Portuguese regiment, under the command of Colonel Bacellar, and of Major Arentschildt's artillery. The Portuguese infantry were not actually charged, but were repeatedly threatened, and they showed the utmost steadiness and discipline, both in the mode in which they prepared to receive the enemy, and in all the movements of a retreat made over six miles of plain in front of a superior cavalry and artillery.

“ The Portuguese artillerymen attached to the guns, which were for a moment in the enemy's possession, were cut down at their guns.

“ The infantry upon this occasion were under the command of Major-General the Hon. C. Colville, Lieut.-General Picton having remained with the troops at El Bodon; and the conduct of Major-General Colville was beyond all praise.

“ Your Lordship will have observed, by the details of the action which I have given you, how much reason I had to be satisfied with the conduct of the 1st hussars, and 11th light dragoons, of Major-General Alten's brigade. There were not more than three squadrons of the two regiments on the ground, this brigade having for some time furnished the cavalry for the outposts of the army, and they charged the enemy's cavalry repeatedly; and notwithstanding the superiority of the latter, the post would have been maintained, if I had not preferred to abandon it to risking the loss of these brave men, by continuing the unequal contest under additional disadvantages, in consequence of the immediate entry of fourteen battalions of infantry into the action, before the support which I had ordered up could arrive. Major-General Alten, and Lieut.-Colonels Cumming and Arentschildt, and the officers of these regiments, particularly distinguished themselves upon this occasion.

“ I have also to mention that the Adjut.-General, Major General the Hon. C. Stewart, being upon the field, gave his assistance as an officer of cavalry with his usual gallantry.

“ In the affair of the 27th, at Aldea da Ponte, Brig.-General Pakenham and the troops of the 4th division, under the orders of Lieut.-General the Hon. G. L. Cole, likewise conducted themselves remarkably well.

“ His Serene Highness, the Hereditary Prince of Orange, accompanied me during the operations which I have detailed to your lordship, and was for the first time in fire ; and he conducted himself with a spirit and intelligence which afford a hope that he will become an ornament to his profession.

“ The enemy having collected, for the object of relieving Ciudad Rodrigo, the army of the north, which were withdrawn from the attack they had commenced on General Abadia in Galicia, in which are included twenty-two battalions of the imperial guards, and General Souham's division of infantry, composed of troops recently arrived in Spain from the army of Naples, and now drawn from the frontier of Navarre, where they had been employed in operations against Mina, together with five divisions and all the cavalry of the army called off Portugal, composing altogether an army of not less than 60,000 men, of which 6,000 were cavalry, and 125 pieces of artillery, I could not pretend to maintain the blockade of Ciudad Rodrigo, nor could any effort which I could make prevent or materially impede the collection of the supplies, or the march of the convoy for the relief of that place. I did all that I could expect to effect without incurring the risk of great loss for no object ; and as the reports as usual were so various in regard to the enemy's real strength, it was necessary that I should see their army, in order that the people of this country might be convinced that to raise the blockade was a measure of necessity, and that the momentary relief of Galicia, and of Mina, where the only objects which it was in my power immediately to effect.

" I have had no reports from the north since I addressed your lordship last, nor from the south of Spain.

" General Girard had collected at Merida a small body of troops, I believe with the intention of making an incursion into Portugal, under the notion that I had withdrawn Lieut.-General Hill's corps from the Alentejo for the purpose of maintaining the blockade of Ciudad Rodrigo. But I imagine that he will break up this collection again, as soon as he shall hear that General Hill is at Portalegre.

" I have the honour to be, &c.

" WELLINGTON.

" P.S. I enclose a return of the killed and wounded on the 25th and 27th instant.

" W."

" Return of the killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of General Viscount Wellington, K. B., in an affair with the enemy on the heights of El Bodon, on the 25th, and near Aldea da Ponte, on the 27th September, 1811.

	Officers,	Non-commd. Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	1	1	40	40	42
Wounded	16	13	156	63	185
Missing	—	1	33	0	34

CHAPTER XXV.

HEIGHTS OF GUINALDO—PICTURESQUE APPEARANCE OF THE FRENCH ARMIES—
HEIGHTS OF EL BODON—FRENCH ATTACK REPULSED—BAYONET CHARGE OF
FIFTH REGIMENT—POSITION TURNED—BEAUTIFUL RETREAT—DANGER OF
THE LIGHT DIVISION—DARING RESOLUTION OF LORD WELLINGTON—MAR-
MONT DISPLAYS HIS ARMY—ANECDOTE—WELLINGTON RETREATS, AFTER
HAVING NARROWLY ESCAPED BEING TAKEN—MARMONT'S REMARK—ANEC-
DOTE OF A FRENCH OFFICER—ARMY CANTONED UPON THE COA—JULIAN
SANCHEZ CARRIES OFF GENERAL REGNAUD AND THE CATTLE OF RODRIGO—
SOULT SENDS GIRARD INTO ESTREMADURA, AND WELLINGTON DESPATCHES
HILL TO OBLIGE HIM TO WITHDRAW—MOVEMENTS OF BOTH GENERALS—
ARROYO MOLINOS—GIRARD SURPRISED AND DEFEATED—LOSSES OF THE
FRENCH—CASUALTIES OF THE ALLIES.

THERE are few lives so unmarked with incident, as not to offer some passages upon which the individual may look back with pleasure or with pain. The humblest journey from the cradle to the grave, is not without its reminiscences; and proportionately as the part enacted in the drama of existence has risen above the ordinary careers of men, memory will recall in greater number and variety, those past events "which cloud the brow, or fire the eye."

Save one, no modern life has been so brilliant or so eventful as that of him, happily surnamed "the Iron Duke." Like Napoleon's, "his crowded hours of glorious strife" followed fast upon each other, each sufficient in itself to support a claim for immortality. Yet, probably, throughout that sparkling career, from its opening at Assye until its close at Waterloo, there is no hour on which the memory of Wellington will dwell with greater pride, than that when he looked calmly from the heights of Guinaldo, on sixty thousand magnificent soldiers in battle order, within cannon range of his position.

In the progress of a campaign, situations of interest or beauty are not unfrequent—and nothing could be more striking, than the first appearance of the united armies, as they advanced to the relief of Ciudad Rodrigo. Far as the eye could range, the roads from Salamanca and Tamames were crowded with dense masses of sparkling soldiery, “accompanied by a countless number of waggons, cars, and loaded mules. Their progress was slow, and apparently cautious; but towards evening the convoy began to enter the place, under cover of about fifteen squadrons of cavalry, which passed the Agueda, and a large column of infantry, which halted upon the plain. Still no symptoms were manifested of a design to cross the river in force, or to attempt anything further than the object which was thus attained; for the advanced cavalry withdrew at dusk, and all bivouacked that night near the town. In the morning, however, as soon as objects became discernible, one corps of cavalry, amounting to at least five-and-twenty squadrons, supported by a whole division of infantry, appeared in motion along the great road, which, leading from Ciudad Rodrigo to Guinaldo, leaves El Bodon on the left; whilst another, less numerous, perhaps, but, like the former, strongly supported by infantry, marched direct upon Espeja. They both moved with admirable steadiness and great regularity; and as the sun happened to be out, and the morning clear and beautiful, their appearance was altogether warlike and imposing.”*

It was a moment when the boldest spirit might have felt alarm. Advanced upon a naked height, the allies at El Bodon were isolated and unsupported; for, from necessity, the British brigades were widely separated from each other. To hold the height was their best hope; for to retire over an extensive plain in the presence of an overwhelming cavalry force, supported by light artillery, would have been an attempt too perilous for any but desperate men to risk. The danger of their position was apparent to all; none

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

blanched from the trial, and with fearless intrepidity, they waited for the French assault.

"While squadron after squadron were defiling along the road, the English infantry remained in columns of battalions behind the ridge, and the cavalry stood dismounted, each dragoon with the bridle on his arm, and apparently as careless to coming events, as if he were on the parade-ground of his barrack, waiting for the trumpet call to "fall in." But when the advanced squadrons were about to mount the ridge, the infantry formed line; the dragoons sprang to their saddles; and the artillery, which had occasionally cannonaded the hostile squadrons as they came within their range, opened with additional spirit, and poured from the height a torrent of grape and case shot, that occasioned a serious loss to the enemy.

"The French appeared to feel sensibly the effect produced by the fire, and a brigade cheered and charged up the heights. The men stood by their guns to the last, but eventually they were obliged to retire. The French dragoons gained the battery, and the cannon were taken.

"Their possession by the enemy was but for a moment. The 5th regiment came steadily forward in line, and after delivering a shattering volley, lowered their bayonets, and boldly advanced to charge the cavalry. This—the first instance of horsemen being assailed by infantry in line—was brilliantly successful. The French were hurried down the height, and the guns recaptured, limbered up, and brought away."*

But valour could not maintain the height against numbers so fearfully disproportionate. A heavy column had moved unnoticed round the rear of the British right, and the position being turned was abandoned. Now was the moment to effect their destruction; for the British infantry were in rapid retreat, and the French squadrons, in all the assurance of success, coming down at speed to annihilate them.

* Victories of the British Armies.

“But they had yet to learn of what stern stuff the British soldier is composed. In a moment the 5th and 77th formed square, and in steady silence awaited the coming onset. The charge was made—the cheering of the dragoons pealed over the battle-field as they came on at speed, and with a fiery determination that nothing apparently could withstand. Against every face of the square a hostile squadron galloped; the earth shook—the cheers rose louder—another moment of that headlong speed must bring the dragoons upon the bayonets of the kneeling front rank. Then from the British square a shattering volley was poured in,—the smoke cleared away, and, but a few yards from the faces of the square, men and horses were rolling on the plain in death. The charge was repulsed, the ranks disordered; and the French dragoons, recoiling from that fearless array they had vainly striven to penetrate, rode hastily off to re-form their broken ranks, and remove themselves from an incessant stream of musketry which had already proved so fatal.”*

The retreat of the right brigade was conducted by Picton in person; and the same daring, the same skill, and the same good fortune attended it. The whole of these gallant regiments united on the plain, and fell back on Guinaldo, which, with Cole's division, they occupied.

The position was not particularly good; and as one of much greater strength lay immediately in his rear, Lord Wellington issued orders for the troops to retire from Guinaldo, and take up ground he had previously selected on the Coa. From delay in the transmission of that order to the light brigade, and General Craufurd considering, when it did arrive, that it would be hazardous to ford the Agueda then, he determined to cross the mountains, and join the main body by a circuitous route, being ignorant that the passes of Gata and Perales were already in possession of the French. Lord Wellington despatched instant orders for the division to countermarch upon

* Victories of the British Armies.

Robleda; and strengthening both flanks of his position with 13,000 infantry and 2,500 horsemen, he remained boldly on Guinaldo.

The night of the 25th, to some who knew how critically Lord Wellington was situated, passed in anxiety and suspense—but the soldiery, wearied with the exertions they had made during the day, slept soundly in their dangerous bivouacs. Fires blazed along the allied line, and every appearance bore the semblance of confidence and defiance.

“ Long before dawn, however, all were astir and in their places; and the different regiments looked anxiously for the moment which should behold the commencement of a game as desperate as any which they had been yet called upon to play. But, instead of indulging our troops as they expected, Marmont contented himself with making an exhibition of his force, and causing it to execute a variety of manœuvres in our presence; and it must be confessed that a spectacle more striking has rarely been seen. The large body of cavalry which followed us to our position, and had bivouacked during the night in the woods adjoining, were first drawn up in compact array, as if waiting for the signal to push on. By and by, nine battalions of infantry, attended by a proportionate quantity of artillery, made their appearance, and formed into columns, lines, echellons, and squares. Towards noon, twelve battalions of the imperial guard came upon the ground in one solid mass; and as each soldier was decked out with feathers and shoulder-knots of a bloody hue, their appearance was certainly imposing in no ordinary degree. The solid column, however, soon deployed into columns of battalions—a movement which was executed with a degree of quickness and accuracy quite admirable; and then, after having performed several other evolutions with equal precision, the guards piled their arms, and prepared to bivouac. Next came another division of infantry in rear of the guards, and then a fresh column of cavalry, till it was computed that the enemy had collected on this single point

a force of not less than 25,000 men. Nor did the muster cease to go on, as long as daylight lasted. To the very latest moment, we could observe men, horses, guns, carriages, tumbrils, and ammunition-waggons, flocking into the encampment; as if it were the design of the French general to bring his whole disposable force to bear against the position of Fuente Guinaldo.”*

Indeed the salvation of the light division was achieved by Wellington, when old-school commanders would have abandoned it in despair. “The object was certainly one of an importance sufficient to justify the resolution, but the resolution itself was one of those daring strokes of genius which the ordinary rules of art were never made to control. The position was contracted, of no great natural strength in front, and easily to be turned; the entrenchments constructed were only a few breast-works and two weak field redoubts, open in rear, and without palisades.”†

While Marmont was amusing himself with this singular review, Lord Wellington looked on with the calmness of an ordinary spectator. Scarcely a third of the allied army was within his reach;‡ and sixty thousand troops, some of them hitherto unconquered, with one hundred and ten pieces of artillery, manœuvring barely out of cannon range. “It was at this moment that a Spanish general, remarkable for his zeal and gallantry, and a great favourite of Wellington’s, observed to him—‘Why, here you are with a couple of weak divisions in front of the whole French army, and you seem quite at your ease;—why, it is enough to put any man in a fever.’—‘I have done, according to the very best of my judgment, all that can be done,’ said Wellington; ‘therefore I care not either for the enemy in front, or for anything which they may say at home.’”§

* Lord Londonderry’s Narrative.

† Napier.

‡ The left wing of the army were at Nava d’Aver, ten miles from Fuente Guinaldo; the fifth division at Payo, a distance of twelve, and the light troops at Cespedosa, fully fifteen miles from the position.

§ Sherer.

But Marmont allowed the golden opportunity to pass. During the night Wellington retreated, united his scattered brigades in their new position, and then courted rather than declined a battle. The affairs at Aldea da Ponte shewed that no impression could be made;* and having exhausted their provisions, the French armies retired on the 28th, covered by a cavalry rear guard, far too powerful in numbers for Lord Wellington to molest.

The military talents of Lord Wellington had been already duly appreciated by the French; and his bold stand at Guinaldo, and masterly retreat upon the Coa, elicited their warmest admiration. In the conduct of these critical operations, the allied general was personally present; and frequently—and as his staff thought—imprudently, exposed himself to fire. On one occasion, he narrowly escaped from being taken prisoner, having been deceived by the perplexing similarity of the dresses worn by the allied and French light cavalry.†

When Marmont was assured that his formidable opponent had lain for six-and-thirty hours in his front, like Samson, shorn of his strength, nothing could surpass his astonishment save the mortification which it caused. The mischief was however, attributed by the French marshal to planetary influence; and he somewhat prophetically exclaimed, that “Wellington’s star was brilliant as Napoleon’s!”

* This terminated the operations. The French placed a fresh garrison in Ciudad Rodrigo; Dorsenne marched to Salamanca; a strong division was posted at Alba de Tormes to communicate with Marmont, and the latter resumed his old position in the valley of the Tagus. At the same time Foy, who had advanced with his two divisions as far as Zarza Mayor, in the direction of Castello Branco, returned to Placentia; Girard also, being threatened by Hamilton’s Portuguese division, which Hill had sent to check his advance, left two thousand men of the fifth corps at Merida, and retired to Zafra.

† “It is impossible to form an idea of the inconveniences and injury which result from having anything like them, either on horseback or on foot. — and his picket were taken in June, because the 3d hussars had the same caps as the French *chasseurs à cheval* and some of their hussars; and I was near being taken, on the 25th September, from the same cause.

“At a distance, or in an action, colours are nothing: the profile, and shape

On no occasion was the intrepidity of the officers on both sides more strikingly displayed. Many instances of personal daring were observed; and one very interesting occurrence is recorded. Felton Harvey, of the 14th light dragoons, had lost an arm in the course of previous service, but though unable to protect himself, he still was seen foremost in the fight. In a cavalry charge, he was encountered by a French officer. With an uplifted sword, the gallant horseman perceived when about to strike, that his opponent was defenceless. Instantly the *coup de sabre* was exchanged for a graceful salute, and, spurring his charger on, the chivalrous Frenchman rode into the thickest of the *mêlée*, to seek a trial with some abler antagonist.

Immediately on the retreat of the enemy, Lord Wellington broke up from his position in front of Alfayates, and leaving outpost duty and the observation of Ciudad Rodrigo to the light and fourth divisions, he crossed the Coa, and took cantonments in the villages on the left bank of the river. The weather became dreadfully wet; the accommodation for the soldiers was very wretched; disease increased frightfully; and, in a short time, sixteen thousand men were in hospital. Out-door pursuits were interrupted by the inclemency of the season; and a dull dispiriting season passed away, in which there was little to amuse, and nothing to excite.

A guerilla enterprise, at this dull period of the campaign, excited from its boldness and success, a consideration of the man's cap, and his general appearance, are what guide us; and why should we make our people look like the French? A *cock-tailed* horse is a good mark for a dragoon, if you can get a side view of him; but there is no such mark as the English helmet, and, as far as I can judge, it is the best cover a dragoon can have for his head.

"I mention this, because in all probability you may have something to say to these alterations; and I only beg that *we* may be as different as possible from the French in everything.

"The narrow top caps of our infantry, as opposed to their broad top caps, are a great advantage to those who are to look at long lines of posts opposed to each other."—*Letter to Lieut.-Colonel Torrens, Fuenda, 6th Nov. 1811.*

derable interest in the allied bivouacs. Julian Sanchez had watched Rodrigo closely, and having observed that the cattle belonging to the garrison were driven out every morning to pasture beyond the works of the fortress, he determined to carry them off. The guard, though weak, were ever on the alert, and for several days Don Julian's band watched from their ambuscade in vain. Fortune at last crowned the patience of the guerilla chief. Regnaud, the governor of Rodrigo, attended by part of his staff and a few dragoons, rode out on the 15th of October, and most incautiously forded the Agueda at the very place where the guerilla cavalry were concealed. In a moment, the French general was surrounded—the escort was taken—and by singular good fortune, the grand object of the enterprise appeared at a sufficient distance from the fortress to admit of their being captured. From under the guns of Rodrigo the cattle were accordingly driven off; and the governor and what proved valuable booty were brought to the head quarters of Lord Wellington. "In a native of any country except France, such an unlucky coincidence would have produced a degree of gloom not to be shaken off; but by General Regnaud, his misfortunes were borne with the utmost philosophy and good humour. He became a frequent guest at Lord Wellington's table, and we found him an extremely entertaining as well as intelligent companion."*

This guerilla exploit was followed by one more important both in character and results. From his cantonments round Portalegre, Hill had kept the garrison of Badajoz on the alert, and prevented any movements in Estremadura. The local position of his corps was in another respect advantageous, as it enabled Castanos with the ruined army of Estremadura, to establish his head quarters at Carceres, a point particularly well adapted for recruiting his reduced battalions, and organizing his troops anew. Soult, to

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

prevent recruits and supplies from reaching the Spanish commander, detached Girard with a moveable column, composed of four thousand infantry and one thousand dragoons ; and the French general having crossed the Guadiana at Merida, became so excessively troublesome in the northern district of the province, that Lord Wellington determined if possible to oblige him to withdraw. Orders to this effect were forwarded to General Hill, and that able officer lost no time in having them successfully executed. On the 22d of October he marched from Portalegre, with a corps he had assembled at Codiceira,—and directing his route towards Carceres, he learned at Albuquerque that Girard, after pushing on to Aliseda, had suddenly fallen back on Arroyo del Puerco. On the 25th, Hill reached Aliseda, where he found the light cavalry under the Conde de Penne Villemur. Instantly resuming operations, the Spanish horse overtook the French, and drove them to Malpartida, which place they abandoned in the night, as Girard did Carceres, on finding that an allied corps was in motion to attack him.

On the evening of the 26th, General Hill having ascertained that the French column was leisurely on its march towards Merida, by the road of Torre Mocha, he pushed for that city by the shorter route of Aldea del Cano and Casa San Antonio—while Girard, ignorant that an enemy was so near him, halted on the 27th at Arroyo Molinos, with his rear-guard at Albala.

Arroyo Molinos is a little town situated at the foot of one extremity of the Sierra de Montanches ; this mountain, which is every where steep and appears almost inaccessible, forms a cove or crescent behind it, the two points of which are about two miles asunder. The Truxillo road winds under the eastern point ; the road to Merida runs at right angles with that to Alcuescar ; and that to Medellin between the Truxillo and Merida roads. The ground between Alcuescar and Arroyo Molinos is a plain, thinly scattered with cork trees and evergreen oaks ; and General

Hill's object was to place a body of troops so as to cut off the retreat of the enemy by any of these roads."*

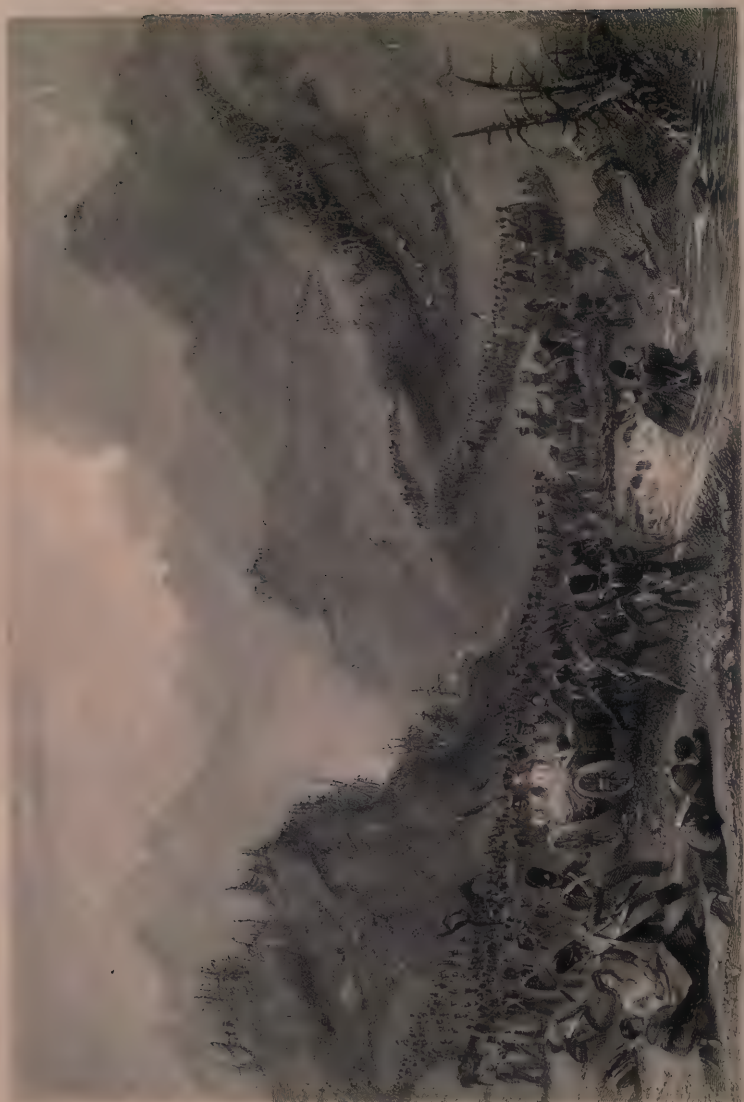
Late in the evening, the allied corps reached Alcuescar, a village within four miles of Arroyo de Molinos. Their approach was not detected. The French had neglected to patrol; and the antipathy of the Spanish peasants to Girard, whose severity had been extreme, prevented him from receiving any intimation that a dangerous enemy was beside him.†

At two o'clock in the morning, Hill marched for Arroyo; and abandoning a bivouac, which throughout a tempestuous night had been uncheered by a single fire, through storm and darkness he moved silently on his enterprise. The delay in marching was alarming, but he reached a hollow within half a mile of the place at half-past six. Here, and undiscovered, his dispositions were rapidly completed. A column under Lieut.-Colonel Stewart marched upon the town—a second, under Major General Howard, made an extensive détour round the right of Arroyo, to gain the Medellin road—and the allied cavalry, moved between the brigades, ready to act wherever their services might be useful.

A brigade of Girard had marched two hours before; but Dombrowski's infantry, and Briche's dragoons, were only falling in on the Medellin road, when the alarm was communicated by a solitary videt. Girard was at first incredulous, but above the howling of the storm, the rush

* Southey.

† "I am happy to add that the greatest harmony subsisted amongst the allied troops during our late operations, and that nothing could exceed the good-will and friendly disposition of the inhabitants of the district through which we passed. I mention it as a singular instance of fidelity and patriotism, that although the inhabitants of Alcuescar in general, as also those of Arroyo Molinos, knew of the arrival of the allied troops in the vicinity of the former place, on the night of the 27th, not a man could be seduced from his duty, and the enemy remained in total ignorance of our near approach. On the other hand, I was correctly informed of every thing going on in Arroyo Molinos during the night."—*Hill's Despatch to Wellington.*



of infantry was heard, and in a few minutes, the 71st and 92d regiments burst into the street, while the wild music of their bagpipes was heard amid the cheering of the highlanders, playing the very apposite tune; "Hey, Johnny Cope, are ye waukin' yet?" Girard, and part of the dragoons had not quitted the village, but they now galloped off, making a bold and irregular resistance, while the infantry formed square, and attempted to cover their retreat. But their pursuers came fast upon them; one Highland regiment lined the vineyard fences—another formed line upon their right—the 50th regiment secured the prisoners—and the rest of the column, with part of the cavalry, extended round the village, and cut off all escape. The English guns had now got up, and opened a crashing fire on the squares, while the French cavalry were dispersed by the charge of the allied dragoons, and the 13th rode bravely forward, and captured the artillery.

"But Girard kept his infantry together, and continued his retreat by the Truxillo road; the right column of the allies was, however, already in possession of that line, the cavalry and artillery were close upon the French flank, and the left column, having re-formed, was again coming up fast. Girard's men were falling by fifties, and his situation was desperate, yet he would not surrender, but giving the word to disperse, endeavoured to escape by scaling the almost inaccessible rocks of the sierra. His pursuers, not less obstinate, immediately divided. The Spaniards ascended the hills at an easier part beyond his left, the 39th regiment and Ashworth's Portuguese turned the mountain by the Truxillo road; the 28th and 34th, led by General Howard, followed him step by step up the rocks, and prisoners were taken every moment, until the pursuers, heavily loaded, were unable to continue the trial of speed with men who had thrown away their arms and packs."*

* Napier.

The surprise at Arroyo de Molinos was a clever and spirited affair—and in a moral point of view, this expedition was less important in itself, than as it was the first indication of a spirit of hopeful enterprise in the British army; it seemed as if that army had now become conscious of its superiority, and would henceforth seek opportunities of putting it to the proof. For the Spaniards it was a well-timed success, when all their own efforts tended only to evince more mournfully the inefficiency of their troops and the incompetence of their generals.”*

The affair at Arroyo was still more enhanced in military value, because a decisive success had been obtained at an expense of life comparatively trifling.† The French suffered heavily; and the summary of their loss was thus detailed by General Hill, in his despatch to Lord Wellington.

“ The ultimate consequences of these operations I need not point out to your lordship; their immediate result is the capture of one general of cavalry (Brun), one colonel of cavalry (the Prince d’Aremberg), one lieutenant-colonel (*chef d’état major*), one aide-de-camp of General Girard, two lieutenant-colonels, one *commissaire de guerre*, thirty captains and inferior officers, and upwards of 1000

* Southey.

† Return of killed, wounded, and missing, of the corps of the army under the command of General Viscount Wellington, K.B., under the immediate orders of Lieut.-General R. Hill, in the action with the French army near Arroyo Molinos, on the 28th of October, 1811.

	Officers.	Non-comd. Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	—	—	7	0	7
Wounded	7	4	53	11	64
Missing	1	—	—	1	1

The Portuguese loss, but not the Spanish, is included in this return.

men, already sent off under an escort to Portalegre; the whole of the enemy's artillery, baggage, and commissariat, some magazines of corn, which he had collected at Carceres and Merida, and the contribution of money which he had exacted from the former town, besides the total dispersion of General Girard's corps.

* * * * *

" P.S. Since writing the above report a good many more prisoners have been made, and I doubt not but the whole will amount to 1,300 to 1,400.

" Brig.-General Morillo has just returned from the pursuit of the dispersed, whom he followed for eight leagues. He reports that, besides those killed in the plains, upwards of 600 dead were found in the woods and mountains.

" General Girard escaped in the direction of La Serena, with 200 or 300 men, mostly without arms, and is stated by his own aide-de-camp to be wounded."



CHAPTER XXVI.

ALARM OCCASIONED BY GIRARD'S DEFEAT—ORDER OF THE BATH BESTOWED ON GENERAL HILL—AFFAIR AT FUENTE DEL MAESTRE—GODINOT'S EXPEDITION FAILS—TROOPS DETACHED TO OCCUPY TARIFA—THAT PLACE INVESTED BY THE FRENCH—PROGRESS OF THE SIEGE—THE TOWN ASSAULTED—SIEGE RAISED—PREPARATIONS TO REDUCE RODRIGO—PLAN OF THE SIEGE—BRIDGE LAID DOWN AT MARIALVA—CITY INVESTED—UPPER TESON CARRIED BY ASSAULT—FRENCH SORTIE—BATTERIES COMMENCE BREACHING—CONVENT OF SAN FRANCISCO STORMED—ORDER FOR THE ASSAULT—COOLNESS OF NAPOLEON AND WELLINGTON.

THE surprise and dispersion of Girard's corps had occurred so unexpectedly, that when the extent of its loss was known, it spread a general alarm throughout Estremadura. Badajoz closed its gates—patrols were constantly kept moving along the fords of the Guadiana; and the more remote detachments of Soult's brigades were directed to concentrate around Seville.

From the allied army, General Hill received a well deserved meed of approbation; and the manly testimony which Lord Wellington bore to the merits of his lieutenant, was honourable to both. On the recommendation of the former, the Order of the Bath was bestowed by the Regent upon the conqueror of Arroyo—an honour to which past services had founded a claim, which after exploits more amply confirmed.

After a period of inactivity, Sir Rowland Hill was again moved from his cantonments into Estremadura; and he marched on the 1st of January, 1812, from Merida, to attack part of the fifth corps, under Drouet, then posted at Almendralejoz. The French general, however, declined a

contest, and abandoning his magazines, retreated by Zafra to Llerena. On this occasion a sharp affair took place between the allied cavalry and a part of Drouet's rear-guard at Fuente del Maestre; the latter were stoutly charged and broken, and lost in killed and prisoners nearly fifty men.

Hill's advance had been intended to embarrass Soult, and distract his attention for a time from Ballasteros, who, with Gibraltar in his rear and the Ronda mountains to favour his operations, had been gradually increasing and organizing an army which daily becoming more formidable, had already, in a great degree, interrupted the French communications between Malaga and Cadiz. Anxious to crush a force from which he had much serious annoyance to expect, Soult detached Godinot with a strong corps; but Ballasteros prudently retired, and placed his army under cover of the guns of Gibraltar. Godinot, unable to effect any thing against an enemy thus protected, retreated in his turn; and Ballasteros suddenly advancing, surprised and defeated a French corps which occupied Bornos, under the command of General Semele. This misfortune, added to the general failure of the expedition, mortified Godinot so deeply, that on reaching Seville, he committed suicide in a fit of despair.

The success of Ballasteros induced the British government to second his efforts, and troops both British and Spanish were detached from Cadiz and Gibraltar, under General Copons and Colonel Skerret, to occupy the old Moorish fortress of Tarifa.

It was doubtful from the weakness of its curtains, and the entire want of ditches and outworks, whether this town was capable of defence: and the principal officers were so little sanguine of success, that both Colonel Skerret and Lord Proby recommended that Tarifa should be abandoned. But, fortunately, others entertained clearer views; and their influence induced their superiors, though reluctantly, to abide the issue of a siege—and the result proved, that the strength of a fortress consists far less in

the solidity of stone walls, than in the gallantry of its defenders.

Tarifa is commanded on its northern and eastern fronts by sand-hills, and the sea washes its southern wall; westward, a low neck of land extends, connected at its extremity by a bridge and causeway with a rocky island, which is but weakly fortified—while at mid-distance between the island and the town, a sand-hill was crowned with a battery, that effectually protected the sea front. Through Tarifa a mountain stream flows, its entrance being protected by a tower and portcullis, while the bed of the river in front of these defences was secured by strong palisades. The number of the garrison did not exceed 2,500 men, of whom about one half were British.

On the 19th of December, General Laval, to whom Victor had entrusted the conduct of the siege, appeared before the place. The investing army mustered 10,000 men, with a powerful siege train, comprising eighteen long sixteen-pounders, and two heavy howitzers. On the 22d,* the French broke ground; on the 29th their batteries were armed and opened with decisive effect, for a few discharges brought down the wall in masses, and left the place open either to assault or escalade.

The fire was renewed upon the 30th, and the breach was widened, until a space of sixty feet was exposed. But, undismayed, the garrison fortified the houses immediately behind it; and made cool preparations to repulse the assault which might now be momentarily expected. The defence of the breach was entrusted to the 47th regiment and a body of Spaniards; the town, portcullis, and ram-

* "The siege commenced with an evil omen; for on the first morning a French picket, having incautiously advanced, was suddenly cut off by a party of the 11th regiment and made prisoners—and a daring sally was made next day. Some of the English garrison penetrated the French camp and seize a gun; of course they were unable to carry it away, but they managed to draw the enemy under the fire of the ships and tower, by which they suffered considerably.

PLAN OF CIUDAD RODRIGO,

(Captured on Assault on the Night of

21st Decr. 1811.)

the Temporary Siege

by St. Peter & from

from Salamanca



part extending to the left, were confided to the 87th; and the space between was connected by a company of riflemen.

“ On the same night, a tremendous rain increased the river to such a height, that the torrents, sweeping all before it, broke down the palisades and injured the portcullis. But this calamity did not daunt the British; they laboured gloriously all night, and by morning the defences were restored.

“ The mountain flood subsided quickly, and at daylight a battalion of French grenadiers quietly approached by the river bed, and rushed forward to break down the stockade. Not a shot had been fired by the British, who waited their approach with perfect coolness; but when they touched the portcullis, a rolling volley was delivered, with such terrible effect, that the head of the column was annihilated, and all that composed it perished, from the officer that led, to the poor drum-boy who beat the *pas de charge*. The river bed was choked with corpses, and that approach was effectually barricaded by the dead—while rushing up the banks, the French grenadiers opened their musketry, assisted by a fire from the trenches and a number of pits in front of their lines, which had been dug by Laval to afford a cover for his sharpshooters. But the column had been too much shattered by the first discharge to recover its courage—a sustained fire of British musketry, closely and efficiently kept up, cut off the boldest of the French soldiers who still made anything like an effort at advancing—while a six-pounder on the town wall enfiladed the assailants at scarcely pistol distance, and kept up an unceasing torrent of grape, that tore up the masses of the enemy, and drove them once more for shelter to the hollow. It was hopeless to continue longer under this murderous fire.—The French retired at speed to their trenches, leaving the bed and banks of the stream heaped with corpses; while the cheering of the garrison, and the band of the 87th, as it struck up a national quick step, strangely contrasted with the groans

of dying men, and the still more harrowing outcries of the wounded.

“ Every kindness was bestowed upon these sufferers by their generous enemy. Those who could be carried off the field were brought through the breach and dressed by English surgeons, or allowed to be removed to their own camp. The weather became horrible—rain fell in torrents—the besiegers and besieged were equally inconvenienced—and on the night of the 4th, Laval, having destroyed part of his artillery and buried the remainder, retreated and abandoned the siege. During the time the French remained before Tarifa, their loss exceeded a thousand men, while the British casualties did not reach much above one hundred.”*

This fortunate defence proved but the forerunner to greater and more important successes. The secret object which had occupied Lord Wellington’s mind so long, was now about to be disclosed, for all the preparations for the siege of Rodrigo were complete, and preliminary measures already taken for an immediate investment of the fortress. Gallegos, Villa del Ciervo, and Espeja had been made entrepôts for the siege stores; while Almeida formed the grand magazine for the battering train and ammunition.

It seemed unaccountable that the extensive movements of artillery and stores from Lisbon to Almeida, should not have aroused the jealousy of the French marshals. It is true they were ostensibly intended to re-arm the latter place; and while Marmont was deceived by the careless attitude assumed by the allies in their cantonments, Soult’s attention was distracted from the point where the storm was about to burst, by the operations then in progress against Tarifa, and the sudden irruption of Hill’s corps into Estremadura, in the pursuit of Count d’Erlon. Unheeded, the allied general was thus enabled to close up his divisions to the more immediate vicinity of the fortress he

* Victories of the British Armies.

was about to attack ; while, straitened for provisions, the marshals were necessitated to spread their troops over an expanse of country, which rendered it impossible on their parts, to effect a rapid concentration, should that be required by any hostile demonstration of the allies.

These were great advantages in favour of Lord Wellington, but he had many countervailing obstacles to surmount. His means of land transport were very scanty, and although by water carriage he had managed to forward seventy heavy guns to Villa de Ponte, he could bring only thirty-eight pieces to the trenches, with a very inadequate allowance of shot. Fortunately however, enough were picked up among the ruined works of Almeida to supply the deficiency ; but the task of their removal was most difficult, as the Portuguese muleteers consumed two days in traversing with empty carts a distance of barely ten English miles in length.

Considering the season of the year, and the nakedness of the country for many miles around the threatened fortress, the intended operation was bold to a degree. The horses had scarcely any forage, and the men were literally destitute of bread or shelter. The new year came in inclemently—rain fell in torrents—and though the investment was delayed two days, one brigade (M'Kinnon's) that marched from Aldea da Ponte, left nearly four hundred men behind, in a route of only four-and-twenty miles, numbers of whom perished on the line of march, or died subsequently of fatigue.*

The general appearance of Ciudad Rodrigo, and the country immediately around the works, has been already described. † Since the French however, had obtained possession of the place, they had made very judicious additions to its defences. Three convents, situated in the centre and on either flank of the suburbs, had been fortified, while that of Santa Cruz, at the north-west angle of the

* Victories of the British Armies.

† Vol. II. page 147.

glacis, had been converted into an infantry post. A small redoubt had been also erected on the upper Teson, supported by the fire of the convent of San Francisco, from which it was distant about 400 yards; and this redoubt completely secured the northern front of Rodrigo from being assailed.

“The general project for the attack, was to storm this redoubt on the first night, and establish a lodgement near it, with a good communication from the rear. On the succeeding night, the lodgement was to be extended to the right to form a parallel, and in front of the parallel to commence batteries for thirty-three pieces of ordnance, to ruin the defences. As soon as these batteries should be finished, to work forward under protection of their fire to the lower Teson, and there erect a battery to breach the main and fausse-braie walls, and during the time of that operation to sap up to the glacis, and blow in the counterscarp.

“To avoid the loss attendant upon forcing such retrenchments as the garrison might make behind the main breach, it was determined to attempt to form another opening in the scarp wall, just before the conclusion of the attack, by unexpectedly bringing a heavy fire on a small projecting tower seen to its base over the fausse-braie, and represented to be excessively weak and bad, and requiring but little battering to bring it down. A battery for seven guns to be prepared for that purpose, and the guns to be taken from the first batteries, when it should be deemed the proper moment.

“The garrison to be driven from the convent St. Francisco, by the fire of the left battery on the upper Teson, which it was concluded would cause the abandonment of the suburbs.

“The weather was excessively cold, and there being no camp equipage with the army, nor cover of any sort to be found in the vicinity of the place, it was regulated that the troops should remain cantoned in the nearest villages, and that the duties of the siege should be taken by the light,

1st, 3d, and 4th divisions alternately; each remaining four-and-twenty hours on the ground.”*

Although the fords of the Agueda permitted the divisions to cross the river both above and below the town, yet the sudden rises to which the stream is liable in winter, alarmed Lord Wellington; and to guard against all chances of his communications being interrupted by sudden floods, he laid down a trestle bridge at the ford of Marialva, six miles below the town.

On the 8th of January, the light division forded the river at La Caridad, and formed the investment; and the engineers' stores were brought across the Agueda by the bridge, and parked 1,800 yards from the fortress. During the day every thing was kept as quiet as possible, and an equal examination made of every side of the town, so as to prevent any suspicion of an immediate effort being intended, or betray to the garrison the point about to be attacked.†

At eight o'clock that evening the redoubt upon the upper Teson was carried by assault. The affair was gallantly effected by three companies of the 52d, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Colborne, and conducted by Lieutenant Thomson. The loss was trifling, and the possession of the work was found of immediate value. “From the lodgement a distinct view was obtained of the defences of the place and of the intervening ground, and the commanding engineer was enabled to decide on the best trace for the parallel and the best sites for the batteries, and at dusk he picketed them out.”‡

Until the 11th, the approaches were rapidly pushed forward, and the batteries and their magazines constructed.

* “The troops are to have with them a day's provisions cooked, and they are to be followed by two days' spirits, and no other baggage.

“A sufficient number of men to cook the provisions for the day the division is relieved, are to be left in the cantonments.”—*Memorandum, Wellington Despatches.*

† Jones's Journal of Sieges.

‡ Ibid.

Some casualties occurred every day, but at this period the garrison distinguished the batteries from the other parts of the work, and attained their range so precisely, that two thirds of their shells fell into them; and their round shot caused many casualties, particularly amongst those at work in the ditch next the place, whenever they unthinkingly exposed themselves. In consequence of this, and some very destructive effects produced from shells exploding in the ditch amongst the workmen, who could not jump out in time to save themselves, the exterior excavation was discontinued altogether, and the interior of the batteries was directed to be sunken to the necessary depth to furnish earth for the parapets. About this time also the garrison adopted the expedient of firing shells filled with powder, and having long fuses in salvos. Some of these falling together into the parapets blew away in an instant the work of hours.*

On the 14th the irregular manner pursued by the allies, in introducing their reliefs to the trenches, had nearly produced a serious disaster. On the appearance of the division for duty, the guards and workmen generally drew off, leaving the trenches for the time without protection. This unmilitary proceeding had been observed from the steeple of the cathedral, and in consequence the garrison made a sally with five hundred men.

The sortie succeeded in upsetting most of the gabions placed during the preceding night in advance of the first parallel. Some of the troops even penetrated into the right of the parallel, and others would have pushed into the batteries, and probably spiked the guns, had it not been for the steady conduct of a few workmen, collected into a body by an officer of engineers, who manned the parapets, and kept up such a steady fire, as to induce the assailants to halt when within a few yards. On the approach of Lieut.-General Graham with the advance of the relieving division, the sortie retired into the town with little loss.†

* Jones's Journal of Sieges.

† Ibid.

Intelligence in the mean time had been received, that induced Lord Wellington to alter his system of attack. Marmont was collecting his detached divisions, and his avowed object being the relief of the place, Wellington determined to prevent it by storming Rodrigo, without waiting to blow in the counterscarp — “in other words, to overstep the rules of science, and sacrifice life rather than time; for such was the capricious nature of the Agueda, that in one night a flood might enable a small French force to relieve the place.”*

The sortie, added to the opening and lining of the embrasures, which the death of the acting engineer had embarrassed, delayed the breaching batteries from commencing their fire until half-past four in the afternoon. Then twenty-seven heavy guns opened; they were promptly answered by every piece of artillery which the garrison could bring to bear; and the united fire produced an effect more strikingly magnificent, than it has been the ordinary good fortune of a British soldier to witness.

“The evening,” says Lord Londonderry, “chanced to be remarkably beautiful and still; there was not a cloud in the sky, nor a breath of wind astir, when suddenly the roar of artillery broke in upon its calmness, and volumes of smoke rose slowly from our batteries. These floating gently towards the town, soon enveloped the lower parts of the hill, and even the ramparts and bastions, in a dense veil; whilst the towers and summits, lifting their heads over the haze, showed like fairy buildings, or those unsubstantial castles which are sometimes seen in the clouds on a summer’s day. The flashes from our guns, answered as they promptly were from the artillery in the place, the roar of their thunder reverberating among the remote mountains of the Sierra de Francisca; these, with the rattle of balls against the masonry, and the occasional crash as portions of the wall gave way, proved, altogether, a scene which, to be rightly understood, must be experienced.”

† Napier.

To the 19th, with the usual incidents that attend a siege, the besiegers continued to breach, and the garrison to offer the boldest and most scientific opposition. The irresistible fire of the British guns had gradually ruined that portion of the works against which its violence was directed. The convent of San Francisco had been already taken with little resistance by the 40th regiment, the breaches rendered practicable, and a summons sent to the governor and declined.*

A personal examination of the breaches confirmed Lord Wellington's previous opinion, that the assault might be given with success; and directing the fire of the breaching batteries to be turned against the guns upon the ramparts, he seated himself upon the reverse of an advanced approach, and wrote out the following order of assault:—

“The attack upon Ciudad Rodrigo must be made this evening, at seven o'clock.

“The light infantry company of the 83d regiment will join Lieut.-Colonel O'Toole at sunset.

“Lieut.-Colonel O'Toole, with the 2d caçadores and the light company of the 83d regiment, will, ten minutes before seven, cross the Agueda by the bridge, and make an attack upon the outwork in front of the castle. The object of this attack is to drive the artillery-men from two guns in that outwork, which bear upon the entrance into the ditch, at the junction of the counterscarp with the main wall of the place: if Lieut.-Colonel O'Toole can get into the outwork, it would be desirable to destroy these guns. Major Sturgeon will show Lieut.-Colonel O'Toole his point of attack.

* “Lord Wellington, willing to spare the lives both of his own troops and of the garrison, sent in to demand a surrender. The reply, though not such as could have been desired, was nevertheless one which all brave men must admire: and I give it in the words of the governor, because these alone can do it full justice: ‘Sa Majesté l'Empereur,’ said he, ‘m'a confié le commandement de Ciudad Rodrigo. Je ne puis pas le rendre. Au contraire, moi et la brave garnison que je commande s'enseveliront dans ses ruines.’”—
Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

Six ladders, twelve feet long each, will be sent from the engineer park to the old French guard-room, at the mill on the Agueda, for the use of this detachment.

“ The 5th regiment will attack the entrance of the ditch at the point above referred to, Major Sturgeon will likewise show them the point of attack ; they must issue from the right of the convent of Santa Cruz ; they must have twelve axes to cut down the gate by which the ditch is entered, at the junction of the counterscarp with the body of the place. The 5th regiment are likewise to have twelve scaling ladders, 25 feet long, and immediately on entering the ditch, are to scale the *fausse-braie* wall, and are to proceed along the *fausse-braie*, in order to clear it of the enemy's posts on their left, towards the principal breach.

“ The 77th regiment are to be in reserve on the right of the convent of Santa Cruz, to support the first party, which will have entered the ditch.

“ The ditch must besides be entered on the right of the breach by two columns, to be formed on the left of the convent of Santa Cruz, each to consist of five companies of the 94th regiment. Each column must have three ladders 12 feet long, by which they are to descend into the ditch, and they are to have ten axes to cut down any palisades which may be placed in the ditch to impede the communication along it.

“ The detachment of the 94th regiment, when descended into the ditch, is to turn to its left to the main breach.

“ The 5th regiment will issue from the convent of Santa Cruz ten minutes before seven.

“ At the same time a party consisting of 180 sappers, carrying bags containing hay, will move out of the second parallel, covered by a fire of the 83d regiment, formed in the second parallel, upon the works of the place, which bags are to be thrown into the ditch, so as to enable the troops to descend the counterscarp to the attack of the breach : they are to be followed immediately by the storming party of the great breach, which is to consist of the

troops of Major-General M'Kinnon's brigade. Major-General M'Kinnon's brigade is to be formed in the first parallel, and in the communications between the first and second parallel, ready to move up to the breach immediately in rear of the sappers with bags. The storming party of the great breach must be provided with six scaling ladders, 12 feet long each, and with ten axes.

"The ditch must likewise be entered by a column on the left of the great breach, consisting of three companies of the 95th regiment, which are to issue from the right of the convent of St. Francisco. This column will be provided with three ladders, 12 feet long, with which they are to descend into the ditch, at a point which will be pointed out to them by Lieutenant Wright: on descending into the ditch, they are to turn to their right, and to proceed towards the main breach; they are to have ten axes, to enable them to cut down the obstacles which may have been erected to impede the communication along the ditch, on the left of the breach.

"Another column, consisting of Major-General Vandeleur's brigade, will issue out from the left of the convent of St. Francisco, and are to attack the breach to the left of the main breach; this column must have twelve ladders, each 12 feet long, with which they are to descend into the ditch, at a point which will be shown them by Captain Ellicombe. On arriving in the ditch, they are to turn to their left, to storm the breach in the *fausse-braie*, on their left of the small ravelin, and thence to the breach in the tower of the body of the place; as soon as this body will have reached the top of the breach in the *fausse-braie* wall, a detachment of five companies are to be sent to the right, to cover the attack of Major-General M'Kinnon's brigade by the principal breach; and as soon as they have reached the top of the tower, they are to turn to their right, and communicate with the rampart of the main breach; as soon as this communication can be established, endeavour should be made to open the gate of Salamanca.

"The Portuguese brigade in the 3d division will be formed in the communication to the first parallel, and behind the hill of St. Francisco, (upper Teson,) and will move up to the entrance of the second parallel, ready to support Major-General M'Kinnon's brigade.

"Colonel Barnard's brigade will be formed behind the convent of St. Francisco, ready to support Major-General Vandeleur's brigade; all these columns will have detached parties especially appointed to keep up a fire on the defences during the above.

"The men with ladders, and axes, and bags, must not have their arms; those who are to storm must not fire.

"Brigadier-General Pack, with his brigade, will make a false attack upon the outwork of the gate of St. Jago, and upon the works towards La Caridad.

"The different regiments and brigades to receive ladders are to send parties to the engineers' depôt to receive them, three men for each ladder."

Courage, like other qualities, has its varieties. Some men are born brave; others acquire intrepidity from example; and even a timid spirit may be stimulated by action, until personal apprehension is overcome. Amid the crash of battle, the dullest soul catches a glorious impulse, and, for the time, casts off its natural torpidity. To exert, however, that mental calmness which conveys, in brief and lucid language the details of plans of action, requiring the agency of many, and whose success the misconception of an individual might destroy—this demands a philosophic concentration of thought, which many found foremost in the press of fight, never can obtain.

This, the most important quality of a great general, Napoleon and Wellington possessed extensively; and when the fate of battle hung upon a hair, both were calm and self-collected, and the order upon which victory or defeat depended, was issued with a coolness that approached insensibility. The terrible attack at Essling was simply indi-

cated by a gesture;* and when tidings were brought upon that bloody evening, which might have palsied the firmest nerves, not a feature of Napoleon was seen to alter.† Sitting on the embankment of a field work, undisturbed by the roar of his own artillery or a responding thunder from the batteries of the fortress, Lord Wellington penned the plan of the assault; and when that writing went forth, the doom of Ciudad Rodrigo was sealed!

* "From his station behind the centre of the French line, Napoleon pointed out with his finger, at seven in the morning, to Lannés, who was on horseback beside him, the direction which his corps should follow in their advance, which was where the Austrian line appeared weakest, between the left of Hohenzollern and the right of Rosenberg."—*Alison's History of Europe*.

† "Reports began to circulate, and soon spread like wildfire through the ranks, that the bridges were broken down, and all communication with the reserve posts, and two-thirds of Davoust's corps, still on the southern bank, cut off. In effect, at half-past eight, the alarming intelligence reached the Emperor, that the fireships and heavy barks laden with stones, sent down by the Archduke, had, with the swelling of the river, produced the desired effect, and that a considerable part of the bridge over the main stream of the Danube had been swept away.

"In this terrible moment Napoleon's courage did not forsake him. Grave and thoughtful, but collected, he allayed by the calmness of his manner the alarm of those around him, and immediately gave the necessary orders to suspend the attacks at all points, and fall back towards the island of Lobau."—*Ibid*.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DAY OF THE ASSAULT—THIRD AND LIGHT DIVISIONS MOVE FORWARD TO THE TRENCHES—APPEARANCE OF THE FORTRESS—TROOPS ADVANCE TO THE ASSAULT—LARGER BREACH OBSTINATELY DEFENDED—THE LESSER CARRIED BY THE LIGHT BRIGADE—MAJOR MACKIE ENTERS THE CITADEL, WHICH SURRENDERS—FEROCIOUS CONDUCT OF THE TROOPS—DEATH OF GENERALS CRAUFURD AND M'KINNON—ALLIED CASUALTIES—RODRIGO A VALUABLE CONQUEST—ITS RAPID REDUCTION—HONOURS BESTOWED ON LORD WELLINGTON—MARMONT'S MOVEMENTS—SEVERITY OF CARLOS D'ESPANA—ESPIONAGE PURSUED ON BOTH SIDES—ANECDOTES—RODRIGO DELIVERED OVER TO THE SPANIARDS—PREPARATIONS TO BESIEGE BADAJOZ—SCARCITY OF MONEY NEARLY INTERRUPTS THE PROGRESS OF THE CAMPAIGN—BADAJOZ INVESTED—ITS ADDITIONAL DEFENCES AND GENERAL STATE OF PREPARATION—LORD WELLINGTON'S MEANS OF ATTACK—RODRIGO NEGLECTED BY THE SPANIARDS—REMONSTRANCE ADDRESSED TO CARLOS D'ESPANA.

EARLY in the day the order of attack had been issued by Lord Wellington; and the officers to whom the conduct of the assault was to be entrusted, had thus ample time allowed them to become perfectly apprized of the duties which they had respectively to perform. To many the day appeared interminably long, and some passed the tedious hours in real or affected merriment—but others in the performance of a more sacred duty—that of conveying to wives or relatives, what might prove the last expressions of an undying regard.

To the third and light divisions, whose turns of duties fell upon the 19th, the assault was confided by Lord Wellington; and they marched from their cantonments to the more immediate vicinity of the trenches. A few minutes after six o'clock, the third moved to the rear of the first parallel, two gun-shots from the main breach,—while the light division formed behind a convent, three hundred yards in front of the smaller one. Darkness came on,—and with it came the order to 'Stand to arms.' With calm determination, the soldiers of the third division heard their

commanding-officer announce the main breach as the object of attack, and every man prepared himself promptly for the desperate struggle. Off went the packs,—the stocks were unbuckled,—the cartouch-box arranged to meet the hand more readily,—flints were screwed home,—every one, after his individual fancy, fitting himself for action. The companies were carefully told off,—the sergeants called the rolls,—and not a man was missing!*

Though the interval from the time when the storming parties entered the trenches, until they moved forward to the assault was brief, it was a period of most intense anxiety and excitement; and accidental circumstances tended to deepen those impressions, which coming events could not have failed to produce. "The evening was calm and tranquil, and the moon, in her first quarter, shed over the scene a feeble light, which, without disclosing the shape or form of particular objects, rendered their rude outline distinctly visible. There stood the fortress, a confused mass of masonry, with its breaches like shadows cast upon the wall; whilst not a gun was fired from it, and all within was as still and motionless as if it were already a ruin, or that its inhabitants were buried in sleep. On our side, again, the trenches crowded with armed men, among whom not so much as a whisper might be heard, presented no unapt resemblance to a dark thunder-cloud, or to a volcano in that state of tremendous quiet which usually precedes its most violent eruptions."†

The bell from the tower of the cathedral tolled seven; and, in obedience to previous orders, the troops marched rapidly, but silently to the assault. The third division, preceded by its storming party under Major Manners, a forlorn hope under Lieutenant Mackie, and accompanied by a body of sappers with hay-bags and ladders, made directly for the greater breach; while the light division, led by Major George Napier, with 300 volunteers, and a forlorn hope under Lieutenant Gurwood, were directed

* Victories of the British Armies.

† Lord Londonderry's Narrative.

against the lesser one.* A Portuguese brigade, commanded by General Pack, were to alarm the fortress on the opposite side, and threaten to escalate at the gate of St. Jago; and, should circumstances warrant the attempt, convert a false attack into a real one.

No piece of clock-work, however nicely arranged, could obey the will of its maker more accurately than the different columns obeyed that night the wishes of their chief; and his orders were, in consequence, executed at every point with the same precision and regularity as if he had been manœuvring so many battalions upon parade.† For a few moments, the heavy tramp of many men put simultaneously into motion alone broke upon the solemn stillness of the evening. But, suddenly, a shout upon the right of the line nearest the bridge was heard; it was taken up along the whole line of attack,—a spattering of musketry succeeded—the storming parties rushed forward to the breaches,—and every gun upon the ramparts that would bear opened with one tremendous crash, and told that the garrison were prepared for the assault and ready to repel it.

At the first alarm, the storming party of the third division advanced, and descended the ditch. At the bottom, a range of heavy shells had been placed with continued fuses; but hurried by the suddenness of the attack, the French prematurely fired them, and their fury had fortunately expended itself, before the assailants were close enough to suffer from a murderous explosion.

“General M’Kinnon’s brigade instantly pushed up the breach, in conjunction with the 5th and 94th regiments,

* The larger breach, exposing a shattered front of more than one hundred feet, had been carefully mined; the base of the wall strewn with shells and grenades, and the top, where troops might escalate, similarly defended. Behind, a deep retrenchment was cut to insulate the broken rampart, in the event of its being carried by storm. The lesser breach was narrow at the top, exceedingly steep, with a four-and-twenty pounder turned sideways, that blocked the passage up, except an opening between the muzzle and the wall, by which two files might enter.

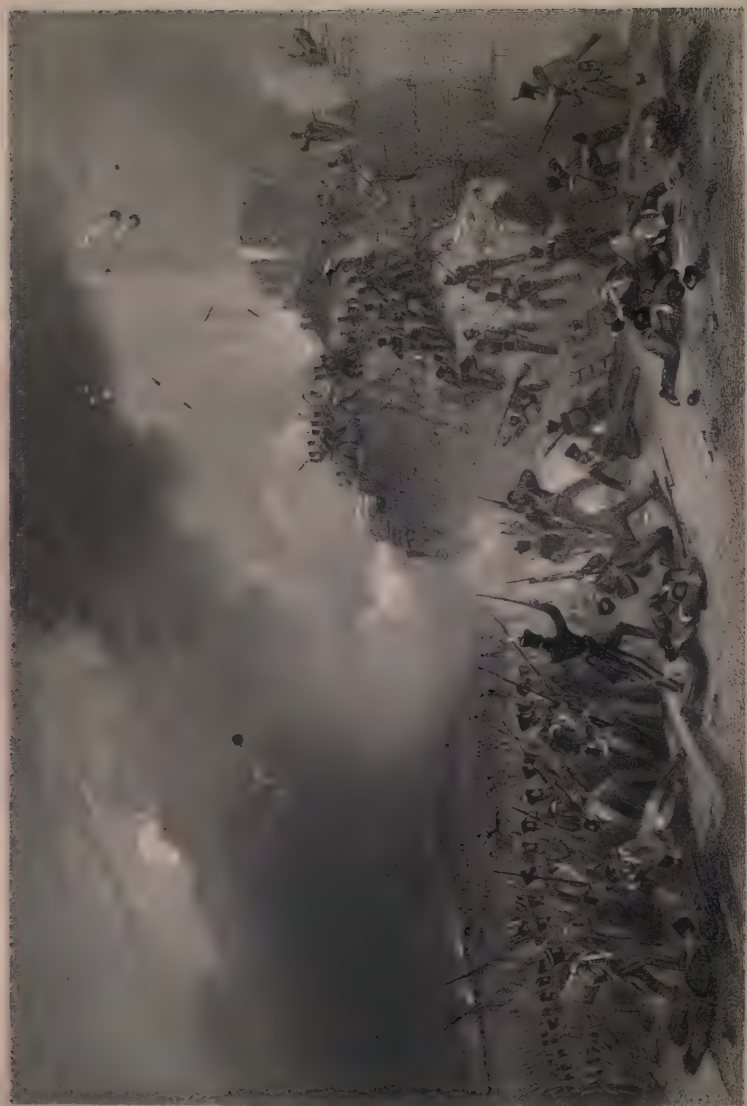
† Lord Londonderry’s Narrative.

which arrived at the same moment along the ditch from their right. The men mounted in a most gallant manner against an equally gallant resistance; and it was not till after a sharp struggle of some minutes that the bayonets of the assailants prevailed, and gained them a footing on the summit of the rampart. The defenders then concentrated behind the retrenchment, which they obstinately maintained, and a second severe struggle commenced."* The lesser breach was, at the same time, assaulted with equal intrepidity, but more decided success. The darkness of the ditch occasioned a momentary confusion, which the fall of the leading officers increased; while the ardour of the light troops brought so many to the breach, that they choked its narrow aperture with their numbers. For a moment the assailants recoiled, but it was only to return more resolutely to the onset. A cheer was heard above the thunder of artillery,—up rushed the stormers,—the breach was gained,—the supporting regiments mounted in sections, formed on the rampart, the 52d wheeling to the left, the 43d to the right,—and that success alone would have decided the fate of Rodrigo.

Although the greater breach had been carried by the first rush, isolated by a rampart 12 feet deep in front, retrenched on either flank, and swept by the fire of a field-piece and musketry from the houses which overlooked and enfiladed it, the progress of the storming party was arrested, and men and officers fell fast. At this trying moment, the gallantry of an adventurous individual, opened the gates of success. Mackie, who led the forlorn hope, dropping from the rampart into the town, discovered that the trench upon the right of the breach was cut quite across, and consequently, that an opening was left by which the assailants might get in. Reascending the top of the breach, he led the men through the trench into the street; and the enemy, on their appearance, abandoned any further effort at defence and fled towards the citadel. The false attack by the

* Jones's Journal of Sieges.





Portuguese, under General Pack, had been equally effective. They carried by escalade a small redan in front of the St. Jago Gate, and of course, materially assisted in distracting the attention of the garrison by the alarm their movement had caused.

Thus terminated the struggle for Rodrigo. Some of the garrison still offered a useless opposition and were put to the sword, but any who demanded quarter, received it. From the great breach, Mackie, with a mixed party, reached the citadel; and his gallantry was rewarded, by receiving there the submission of General Barrie and such of the garrison as it contained.*

* The honour of taking the citadel and governor of Rodrigo has been claimed by, and generally considered to belong to another and a distinguished officer. Major William Mackie is no more,—and the grave has closed upon one of the most gallant and neglected soldiers of his times. The fame of one, whom the author of these pages from early manhood regarded with brotherly affection, is sacred; and he cannot permit the honour of an action, indubitably achieved by his lamented friend, to be assumed by another, no matter how deserving or distinguished. Colonel Gurwood, under a firm conviction, no doubt, that he was justly entitled to it, has informed the world, that “as the captor of the governor of Rodrigo, the Duke of Wellington presented him with his prisoner’s sword.” To receive *that sword* from *that hand* was, indeed, an honour of which Colonel Gurwood might be proud; but *the hand* to whom it should have been transferred, is blanching in the sands of Africa. To deserve and be neglected,—to see men whose services never extended beyond the trooping of a guard, pass over him by hundreds,—to witness military distinctions bestowed on individuals, whose claims were weak, as the persistency with which they were urged was boundless,—all these were borne by my friend without a murmur. He felt the injustice, but his was too proud a spirit to stoop either to remonstrance or complaint. But though the deed passed unrewarded, to have its performance claimed by another was not to be endured; and Major Mackie addressed to Lieut.-Colonel Napier a modest but accurate statement of the part he had acted in the storming of Rodrigo, leaving to the world—as I do—the task of deciding to whom, by right of conquest, the sword of General Barrie should have belonged. Premising, that after discovering an entrance from the breach to the street, and leading the storming party into the town, Mackie proceeded towards the citadel with such scattered men as could be induced to follow, of the after occurrences we shall give his own detail:—

“Having advanced considerably, and passed across a street running to the left, a body of the enemy came suddenly from that street, rushed through our ranks, and escaped. In pursuit of this body, which after passing us held their

After all resistance had ceased, the usual scene of riot, plunder, and confusion, which by prescriptive right the stormers of a town enjoy, occurred. Every house was entered and despoiled; the spirit stores were forced open; the soldiery got desperately excited; and in the madness of their intoxication, committed many acts of silly and wanton violence.* All plundered what they could, and in turn they were robbed by their own companions. Brawls and

course to the right, I urged the party forwards in that direction, until we reached the citadel, where the governor and garrison had taken refuge. The outer gate of the inclosure being open, I entered at the head of the party, composed of men of different regiments, who by this time had joined the advance. Immediately on entering I was hailed by a French officer, asking for an English general to whom they might surrender. Pointing to my epaulets in token of their security, the door of the keep or stronghold of the place was opened, and a sword presented to me in token of surrender, which sword I accordingly received. This I had scarcely done, when two of their officers laid hold of me for protection, one on each arm, and *it was while I was thus situated that Lieutenant Gurwood came up and obtained the sword of the governor.*

"In this way, the governor with Lieutenant Gurwood, and the two officers I have mentioned still clinging to my arms, the whole party moved towards the rampart."

"I declare on the word of a man of honour, that *I was the first individual who effected the descent from the main breach into the streets of the town, that I preceded the advance into the body of the place, that I was the first who entered the citadel, and that the enemy there assembled had surrendered to myself and party before Lieutenant Gurwood came up.*"

"I appeal to any man in the least degree acquainted with the rules of modern warfare, if under these circumstances I am not justified in asserting, that before, and at the time Lieutenant Gurwood arrived, the whole of the enemy's garrison within the walls of the citadel, governor included, were both *de jure* and *de facto* prisoners to myself. In so far, therefore, as the being the individual who made its owner captive could give either of us a claim to receive that sword to which Colonel Gurwood ascribes such magic influence in the furthering of his after fortunes, I do maintain that, at the time it became *de facto* his, it was *de jure* mine."

* "The town was fired in three or four places; the soldiers menaced their officers, and shot each other; many were killed in the market-place; intoxication soon increased the tumult; disorder every where prevailed, and at last, the fury rising to an absolute madness, a fire was wilfully lighted in the middle of the great magazine, when the town and all in it would have been blown to atoms, but for the energetic courage of some officers and a few soldiers who still preserved their senses."—*Napier.*

bloodshed resulted ; and the same men who, shoulder to shoulder, had won their way over the " imminent deadly breach," fought with demoniac ferocity for some disputed article of plunder. At last, worn out by fatigue, and stupified with brandy, they sank into brutal insensibility. On the second day, with few exceptions, the whole rejoined their regiments ; the assault and sacking of Rodrigo appearing in their confused imaginations rather like some troubled dream than a sad reality of blood and violence."*

A place of strength defended so desperately as Ciudad Rodrigo could not have been carried but with a heavy expenditure of life, and consequently, the losses of the third and light divisions were severe, and both had to lament the fall of a favourite general. Craufurd was mortally wounded in leading the attack upon the lesser breach, and M'Kinnon perished on the greater, as it was supposed, by the explosion of a mine,—the last desperate effort of the garrison when driven from their defences. Both were officers of the greatest promise—men already distinguished, and wanting only farther opportunities to display the military talents which they unquestionably possessed, to place their names among those of the best generals of the day. Craufurd was buried in the breach before which he had received his mortal wound ; and M'Kinnon was carried to Espeja by the officers of the Coldstream guards, and there interred with due solemnity. In reporting Craufurd's death, Lord Wellington bore the amplest testimony to the " tried talents" of one whom he justly termed " an ornament to his profession," and from whose experience and ability he declared that he had derived much valuable assistance. M'Kinnon was universally regretted. To personal accomplishments, he united the blindest address and the gentlest disposition. Every quality which constitutes a perfect soldier he possessed—and " he was one of those men whom the dreadful discipline of war renders only more considerate

* Victories of the British Armies.

for others, more regardless of themselves, more alive to the sentiments and duties of humanity.”*

The casualties attendant on the siege and storm amounted to above 1,000;† “and unhappily the loss of life did not end with the battle, for the next day as the prisoners and their escort were marching out by the breach, an accidental explosion took place, and numbers of both were blown into the air.”‡

* General M’Kinnon had been educated in France, his family residing for a time in Dauphiny. Among the visitors at his father’s house, Napoleon, then a military student, was included; and it would appear that he then had contracted an early regard for the settlers, which in after elevation he evinced by inviting them to return to France. When the death of M’Kinnon was announced to him, the Emperor, it was said, betrayed more emotion than the loss of friends generally caused.

Doctor Southey relates the following interesting anecdote:—“The unwholesome heat in the vicinity of Badajoz induced some recurrence of a disease with which he had been attacked in Egypt, and General M’Kinnon returned for a few weeks to England there to recruit his health. In 1804 he had married a daughter of Sir John Call: she planted in his garden a laurel for every action in which her husband was engaged: and when in his last visit she took him into the walk where they were flourishing, he said to her, that she would one day have to plant a cypress at the end. Perhaps this country has never sustained so great a loss since the death of Sir Philip Sydney.”

† “Return of killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of General Viscount Wellington, K.B., during the siege and in the assault of Ciudad Rodrigo, from the 8th to the 19th of January, 1812.

	Officers.	Non-comd. Officers and Drummers.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-Commission- ed Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	9	11	158	—	178
Wounded	70	35	713	—	818
Missing	—	—	7	—	7

“Of the above numbers 6 officers and 140 men were killed, and 60 officers and 500 men wounded in storming the breaches.”

‡ Napier.

The military importance of Ciudad Rodrigo rendered it a valuable conquest; and its capture placed in Lord Wellington's hands 80 French officers and 1,500 men. The arsenal was abundantly supplied; and besides the artillery of the place, consisting of one hundred and ten mounted guns, Marmont's battering train was taken with the fortress.

The rapid reduction of Ciudad Rodrigo was unparalleled in modern war, and its fall was so unexpected, that Marmont's efforts to relieve it were scarcely conceived and commenced, before the tidings reached him that the fortress he prized so highly was lost. By the lowest estimate of time it was calculated that four-and-twenty days would be required to bring the siege to a successful issue. On the 8th ground was broken, and on the 19th the British colours were flying from the flag-staff of the citadel. Massena, after a tedious bombardment, took a full month to reduce it; Wellington carried it by assault in eleven days. No wonder therefore, that Marmont, in his despatch to Berthier, was puzzled to account for the rapid reduction of a place, respecting whose present safety and ultimate relief he had previously forwarded the most encouraging assurances.*

“The audacious manner in which Wellington stormed the redoubt of Francisco, and broke ground on the first night of the investment; the more audacious manner in which he assaulted the place before the fire of the defence had been in any manner lessened, and before the counterscarp had been blown in; were the true causes of the sudden fall of the place. Both the military and political state of affairs warranted this neglect of rules. The final success depended more upon the courage of the troops than the skill of the engineer; and when the general terminated his order for the assault with this sentence, ‘Ciudad Rodrigo *must* be stormed this evening,’ he knew well that it would be nobly understood. Yet the French

* Victories of the British Armies.

fought bravely on the breach, and by their side many British deserters,* desperate men, were bayoneted.”†

The splendid achievement of the conqueror of Rodrigo obtained an honourable requital. He was advanced, in Spain, to the rank of a grandee of the first order, with the title of Duque de Ciudad Rodrigo; by the Portuguese, he was made Marquis of Torres Vedras; and at home, raised to the earldom of Wellington, with an increased annuity of 2,000*l.* a year. In the debate which took place in the lower house when the grant for supporting his additional honours was proposed, “Mr. Canning took occasion to state that a revenue of 5,000*l.* a year had been granted to Lord Wellington by the Portuguese government when they conferred upon him the title of Conde de Vimeiro; that as captain-general of Spain, 5,000*l.* a year had been offered him, and 7,000*l.* as marshal in the Portuguese service; all which he had declined, saying, ‘he would receive nothing from Spain and Portugal in their present state; he had only done his duty to his country, and to his country alone he would look for reward.’”‡

On learning that Rodrigo was besieged, Marmont had hastily concentrated the troops previously in cantonments; but as the intelligence had only reached him on the 15th at Valladolid, it was the 25th before he was in a condition that would warrant him in disturbing the investment. At Salamanca the French corps had united on the 25th, forming a grand army of 45,000 men, but they were still four marches from the fortress, which six days before had fallen. The junction of 5,000 men detached from Hill’s corps, rendered

* Many of these misguided men had sought shelter in Rodrigo, and most of them perished during the assault. A few however, were executed afterwards, but mercy was extended to the remainder. A treasonable correspondence was at the same time discovered to have existed between some of the inhabitants and the French marshals—and these traitors to their country were exterminated by Carlos d’España, root and branch; the severity of the Spanish general forming a strong contrast to the lenity with which Lord Wellington visited the worst of military crimes—desertion.

† Napier.

‡ Parliamentary Register.

Lord Wellington strong enough to abide a trial, if Marmont should move forward to the Agueda, on learning that Rodrigo had been carried; but the French marshal retired again to Valladolid, his troops exhausted by forced marches, and himself unable to comprehend what ulterior objects his dangerous opponent might have in view.

The severe measures which Don Carlos d'España had pursued in his merciless execution of the Spanish traitors in Rodrigo, had removed those persons from whom Marmont had hitherto received his most accurate information, and at a time when Lord Wellington's designs were more impene-trable than ever. At no more embarrassing period indeed, could his secret intelligence have been interrupted; and nothing remained for the French marshal but to disperse his army again, and wait patiently until the plans of the allied general should be more fully developed.

It was a matter of surprise to all who were not aware of the extensive espionage employed on both sides, how accurately Lord Wellington and the French marshals to whom he was opposed, were acquainted with the objects and the capabilities of each other. At Lisbon, many persons in immediate connexion with the Regency were more than suspected of holding a correspondence with the French; and their treachery was encouraged by the culpable misconduct of the Portuguese government in not punishing criminals whose treasons had been established beyond a question. The English newspapers were regularly transmitted from Paris by Napoleon; and they teemed with intelligence mischievously correct, and that too, from the head quarters of the allied army; and—though a circumstance of rare occurrence—if an intimation of what he intended to attempt escaped from Lord Wellington's lips to the Spaniards with whom he was in communication, through the indiscretion of these individuals it was sure to reach the enemy. He says, writing to his brother,—“ I apprized ——— of my intention and plan for attacking Ciudad Rodrigo, and him alone, the success of which depends

principally upon the length of time during which I can keep it concealed from the enemy. Some Spanish women at Portalegre were apprized of the plan by him, and it must reach the enemy!!! Yet —— is one of the best of them."

Through the correspondence intercepted by the guerillas, Lord Wellington constantly obtained the most valuable information. This was generally contained in letters from the French generals themselves, intended to direct the movements of their colleagues. Although their despatches were written in cypher, the allied leader generally contrived to find out the key which unveiled their contents; and his own secret espionage was even more extensive than the enemy's. "He had a number of spies amongst the Spaniards who were living within the French lines; a British officer in disguise constantly visited the French armies in the field; a Spanish state-counsellor, living at the head-quarters of the first corps, gave intelligence from that side; and a guitar-player of celebrity, named Fuentes, repeatedly making his way to Madrid, brought advice from thence. Mr. Stuart, under cover of vessels licensed to fetch corn for France, kept *chasse marées* constantly plying along the Biscay coast, by which he not only acquired direct information, but facilitated the transmission of intelligence from the land spies, amongst whom the most remarkable was a cobbler, living in a little hutch at the end of the bridge of Irun. This man, while plying his trade, continued for years, without being suspected, to count every French soldier that passed in or out of Spain by that passage, and transmitted their numbers by the *chasse marées* to Lisbon."*

To Castanos, as captain-general of the province, and who had been personally present at the siege, Ciudad Rodrigo was formally delivered over,—Lord Wellington having rendered the place defensible again by filling in the trenches, repairing the breaches, and adding considerably to the strength of the outworks. Provisions were also allocated for the use of the garrison from his own magazines, and money sup-

* Napier.

plied to defray the expenses of labour and materials; and on the 5th of March, Colonel Fletcher handed the fortress over to Calvert, the Spanish engineer.

Since the preceding December, Lord Wellington had been actively engaged in preparing the necessary means for the investment of Badajoz. Elvas was the grand entrepôt—and there siege stores were collected, and gabions and fascines prepared. The pontoon bridge was also brought forward from Abrantes; and a battering train, which had been conveyed by sea and river carriage in the first place to Alcacer de Sal, was finally transported to the banks of the Guadiana. These preparations, from want of a proper supply of animals of draught, were exceedingly difficult and tedious; and while forage and provisions were scarcely procurable at any price, the military chest of the allied general was dangerously exhausted. “But the talents of Lord Wellington always rose with his difficulties, although the want of specie crippled every operation. A movement into Spain, such as that now intended against Andalusia, could not be effected without magazines when there was no harvest on the ground, except by paying ready money; because it was certain that the Spaniards, however favourably disposed, would never diminish their own secret resources for mere promises of payment. The English general and Mr. Stuart, therefore, endeavoured to get British bank notes accepted as cash, by the great merchants of Lisbon and Oporto; and Lord Wellington reflecting that, from the enormous sums spent in Portugal, many persons must needs have secret hoards which they would be glad to invest if they could do it safely, asked for English exchequer-bills to negotiate in the same manner; intending to pay the interest punctually and faithfully, however inconvenient it might prove at the moment. This plan could not be adopted with Portuguese paper, because the finances were faithlessly managed by the regency; but some futile arguments against the proposition were advanced by Lord Liverpool, and money became so scarce, that even in the midst of victory, the war was

more than once like to stop altogether from absolute inability to proceed.”*

Leaving a division on the Agueda to observe the frontier, Lord Wellington proceeded to Elvas by Villa Velha, where he fixed his head-quarters on the 11th of March. The pontoon bridge was thrown across the Guadiana on the 15th, and on the same day two flying bridges were established. On the 16th Marshal Beresford passed the river, and invested Badajoz with the third, fourth, and light divisions, and a Portuguese brigade; General Graham, with the fifth, sixth, and seventh divisions, and two brigades of cavalry, marched upon Llerena; while General Hill moved by Merida upon Almendralejoz. These covering armies were intended to prevent a junction between the corps of Soult and Marmont, while the siege should be in progress—the former Marshal being in front of Cadiz—the latter moving by Toledo in the direction of Valladolid.

When Lord Wellington sat down before Badajoz, its garrison consisted of five thousand effective men, under the command of a most distinguished engineer who had already defended the fortress with success. Since the former siege, Baron Phillipon had strengthened the place by mounting additional guns, retrenching the castle, and securing Fort San Christoval, which he connected by a covered way with the bridge by which the fort and city were united. “The Pardaleras too had been repaired and strengthened, and magazines established in the castle, into which, and into the citadel, it was the governor’s intention to retire, if the place should be rendered no longer tenable. The enemy had also formed galleries and trenches at each salient of the counterscarp, in front of what they supposed would be the point of attack, that they might form mines under the breaching-batteries, and afterwards sink shafts for other mines, whereby to destroy the works in proportion as the assailants should gain them, and thus leave only a heap of ruins if the place should be taken. No foresight, indeed,

* Napier.

had been wanting on the governor's part. The peasantry having taken flight at the first siege and left their lands uncultivated, he had given directions for ploughing them with the oxen which were intended for slaughter, and they were sown by the soldiers within a circle of 3,000 yards: the kitchen gardens had also been distributed among the different corps and the officers of the staff, and in these they had a valuable resource."*

Convoys had reached Badajoz on the 10th and 16th of February, and the garrison was amply provisioned. Part of the inhabitants, to avoid the horrors of a siege which they had already twice experienced, voluntarily quitted the place; and such of the remainder as had not a sufficiency of food to maintain their families for three months were forcibly expelled. In powder and shells Phillipon was inadequately provided; for two convoys, which had attempted to bring him a supply, had been threatened by Hill's corps and obliged to return to Seville.

Such was the condition of Badajoz when, limited both in time and means, Lord Wellington determined to attack it. Although his battering train was respectable, and by exertions under which an iron constitution had nearly yielded, a tolerable supply of stores and ammunition had been obtained, still he was unprepared to undertake a formal siege. Mortars he had none—his miners were few and inexperienced—and if his operations were delayed, an advance of the French armies, or even the stormy weather he might prepare for at the equinox, must certainly interrupt the investment, and render his efforts to reduce Badajoz unavailing.

It would appear that the evil influences which occasionally dimmed the brightness of his star, proceeded invariably from those allies with whose fortunes his own were so intimately blended—and most of the embarrassments which checked success, were produced by the misconduct or apathy of those who were termed friends. To complete

* Southey.

the siege stores, those intended for the use of Elvas had been withdrawn, and consequently, that fortress was to a certain extent left defenceless. From his own magazines Rodrigo had been largely provisioned; and although his military chest was drained to the very bottom, still he left with Vivas, the Governor, 12,000 dollars to repair the works. What then must have been his surprise and disgust to receive a communication from Carlos d'España, stating that Rodrigo was but "provisioned for twenty-three days," and if Marmont could establish a single division between the Coa and Agueda, that place, whose reduction had cost so much British blood and treasure, must pass again into the hands of the enemy!

Justly incensed at the incapacity of an ally unequal to profit by success, or retain a conquest achieved so dearly as Ciudad Rodrigo had been, Lord Wellington gave an unreserved expression to his feelings,—and there are few letters in his voluminous correspondence which conveyed his opinions with more pointed and merited severity.

"The report which you make of Ciudad Rodrigo distresses me much. I had hoped that, when by the labour of the British and Portuguese troops, and at the expense of the British Government, I had, in concert with General Castaños, improved and repaired the works of Ciudad Rodrigo, so that at all events the place was secure from a *coup de main*, and had left money in order to complete the execution of what our troops had not time to complete, I should not have been told by your Excellency, that for want of the assistance of fifteen or twenty British soldiers, who are artificers, and whose services are required for other objects essential to the cause of Spain, the whole business is at a stand. Is it possible that your Excellency can be in earnest? Is it possible that Castille cannot furnish fifteen or twenty stone-cutters, masons, and carpenters, for the repair of this important post? How have all the great works been performed which we see in the country?

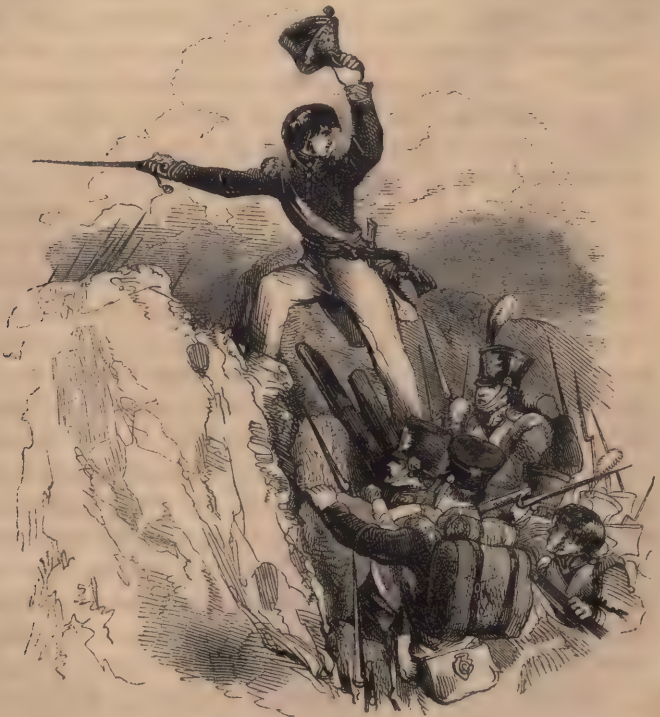
"But your Excellency's letter suggests this melancholy

reflection, that everything, as well of a military as of a laborious nature, must be performed by British soldiers."

After enumerating the various supplies he had already placed in Rodrigo, Lord Wellington concludes:—

"In writing this letter to your Excellency, I do not mean to make any reproach. I wish only to place upon record the facts as they have occurred, and to show to your country and to my country, and the world, that if this important place should fall, or if I should be obliged to abandon plans important to Spain in order to go to its relief, the fault is not mine."*

* Dated, Camp before Badajoz, 20th March, 1812.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

STATE OF BADAJOZ—PLAN OF ATTACK—GROUND BROKEN—FRENCH SALLY AND ARE REPULSED—COLONEL FLETCHER WOUNDED—BAD WEATHER INTERRUPTS THE OPERATIONS—BRIDGE SWEEP AWAY—BATTERIES COMMENCE BREACHING—LA PICURINA CARRIED BY ASSAULT—PROGRESS OF THE SIEGE—SOULT ADVANCES TO LLERENA, AND WELLINGTON DETERMINES TO ASSAULT THE CITY—PLAN OF ATTACK—PHILLIPON'S PREPARATIONS TO REPULSE IT—EVENING OF THE STORM—BREACH ASSAILED WITHOUT SUCCESS—CASTLE ESCALADED—SAN VINCENTE CARRIED BY A BRIGADE OF THE 5TH DIVISION—WELLINGTON'S POSITION AND BEARING DURING THE ASSAULT—OUTRAGES COMMITTED BY THE TROOPS—FRENCH AND ALLIED CASUALTIES—REVIEW OF THE SIEGE—ORDER RESTORED—AND HEAD QUARTERS ESTABLISHED IN BADAJOZ.

THE works of Badajoz, in their relative strength, varied considerably. About the middle of the last century, a royal order was issued to rebuild the *enciente** of the fortress; but it was so partially effected, that although new bastions were erected, the original curtains were suffered to remain. These being extremely low and of loose construction, were breached by the French with little difficulty;

* The reader who is not acquainted with terms used by engineers may find a brief explanation of those of frequent recurrence serviceable.

The glacis is the part beyond the covert-way to which it forms the parapet.

The flank is any part of a work which defends another.

The epaule is the shoulder of the bastion.

The gorge is next the body of the place where there is no rampart.

Fougasse is a small mine, six or seven feet under ground, generally formed in the glacis or dry ditch.

Curtain, the wall that connects bastions.

Counterguards are small ramparts with parapets and ditches, erected in front of a bastion or ravelin, to secure the opposite flanks from being open to the covert-way.

Lunettes are works on either side of a ravelin, with one perpendicular face. They are sometimes thrown up beyond the second ditch opposite the places of arms.

BADAJOS

PLAN OF THE

- 1 Fort St. James
- 2 Fort St. James
- 3 Fort St. James
- 4 Fort St. James
- 5 Fort St. James
- 6 Fort St. James
- 7 Fort St. James
- 8 Fort St. James
- 9 Fort St. James
- 10 Fort St. James
- 11 Fort St. James
- 12 Fort St. James
- 13 Fort St. James
- 14 Fort St. James
- 15 Fort St. James
- 16 Fort St. James
- 17 Fort St. James
- 18 Fort St. James

ALL THE ARMIES OF THE

THE





and apprized that their masonry was very bad, Lord Wellington, in his dispositions for the siege, took care to avail himself of this information.

As the counter-guard in front of the right face of La Trinidad had been left unfinished, the main scarp of the bastion might be seen sufficiently low down from the hill on which fort Picurina stands, to be breached from thence. In consequence it was proposed to establish a parallel which should embrace Fort Picurina with its left, and extend so far to the right, as to form a first parallel against the place in which enfilading batteries might be established to keep under the fire of all the faces and flanks bearing on the Picurina hill; also to throw up batteries on the left of the parallel to injure the front defences of Fort Picurina, and to plunge into its interior with small charges, fired at high elevations, so as to break down the palisades along its gorge.

“ These batteries were to open at day-light, and on the evening of the same day it was proposed to assault Fort Picurina, make a lodgment in it, and connect it with the first parallel. Then to throw up breaching batteries in the most eligible situations on the Picurina hill, to breach the right face of the bastion Trinidad; and as the attack

Revêtement of a battery is the exterior front formed of masonry or fascines, which keeps the bank of the work from falling.

Cunettes are small ditches.

Enceinte comprehends the whole defences of a place, except detached outworks.

Gabions (A) are large circular baskets, filled with earth or sand, and used for forming parapets, covering working parties, &c. &c.



Fascines (B) are small branches of trees bound together thus: — They are used for filling ditches, raising batteries, &c.



Retrench, in fortification, means the isolating of a breach by forming inner defences; as cutting a trench, palisading, erecting barricades, &c.

Chevaux de frise, are wooden spars, spiked at one end, and set into a piece of timber. They were originally used as a defence against cavalry, but are now commonly employed in strengthening outworks, stopping breaches, &c.

would not admit of the opposite flank of the bastion of Santa Maria being silenced by enfilade fire, it was proposed to breach it also at the same time with the face. Further, as from the distance of the breaching batteries, several days would be required to render the breaches practicable, during which time the garrison might retrench them, it was proposed, as soon as the great breaches should become practicable, to turn the fire of all the breaching guns upon the curtain between them, and make a third breach in it, which would from its situation turn the defences of the other two. The obstacles of the inundation to be avoided, by forming the columns for the assault behind the hills to the south and west of it. The covered-way and ditch to be entered as at Rodrigo."

"The park was fixed on a gently rising ground, about 1,800 yards from the place, a little to the south of the Talavera road. The intervening heights of St. Michael concealed it from the view of the garrison.

"In the course of the siege there were deposited in the park 3,000 intrenching tools, 80,000 sand-bags, 1,200 gabions, 700 common fascines, and an equal number of tracing fascines, with a sufficient supply of plank and splinter-proof timber and small stores. A quantity of brushwood was collected in the vicinity, and made serviceable during the operation." *

On the night of the 17th, Lord Wellington broke ground in front of Picurina, within 160 yards of the fort. The tempestuous state of the weather favoured the operation—the workmen were undiscovered by the enemy—and at daybreak, the approaches were 3 feet deep.

During the 18th, the work continued; the relief improving the parallel, and the garrison, which had been strongly reinforced, keeping up a heavy fire of musketry on the labourers, assisted by frequent discharges from some field-pieces and a howitzer. The fire however produced

* Jones's Journal of Sieges.

but few casualties; and during the night the parallels were prolonged, and two batteries traced out.*

On the 19th, while the working parties were busily engaged, 1,500 French infantry, and 40 horsemen, commanded by General Vielland, issued from the town by the Talavera gate unobserved, and with 100 from Picurina, fell suddenly on the working party in the parallel. Mostly unarmed, and completely taken by surprise, the men were driven from the trench in great confusion; but, being almost immediately rallied by their officers, in turn they charged the French vigorously and repulsed them. The sally caused much alarm; but it was too promptly repelled to occasion any loss more serious than the overturning of the gabions, and a trifling filling in of part of the approaches. "Some hundred entrenching tools were carried off, for Phillipon had promised a high price for each; yet this turned out ill, because the soldiers, instead of pursuing briskly, dispersed to gather the tools. After the

* Some idea may be formed of the difficulty which Lord Wellington must have found in besieging Badajoz, when it is recollected, that with his defective means of transport, the annexed number of guns, and supply of ammunition, were brought forward and parked :—

24-pounders iron	16
18-pounders ditto, (<i>Russian guns</i>)	20
24-pounder howitzers iron	16
	<hr/> 52

24-pounder round shot from the north, from Alcacer do Sal, and collected at Elvas, (including 6,720, 22-pounder and 23-pounder)	22,367
18-pounder round shot from Alcacer do Sal, and collected at Elvas	17,837
5½-inch common shells	2,526
5½-inch spherical ditto	2,440
24-pounder grape	1,680
24-pounder case	424
18-pounder grape	1,000
18-pounder case	500

with an ample supply of powder.

Some additional supplies of 24-pounder and 18-pounder round shot were received from Alcacer during the operation.

action a squadron of dragoons and six field-pieces were placed as a reserve-guard behind St. Michael, and a signal-post was established on the Sierra de Venta, to give notice of the enemy's motions."*

The fighting while it lasted was severe, the French losing above 300 officers and men, and the allies about half that number. Several English officers were taken by the French cavalry, who secured them to their saddles, and attempted to carry them into the town; but the pursuit became so hot, that they were soon obliged to free themselves from such encumbrances, and consequently, the captives got away.

Colonel Fletcher, the commanding engineer, was unfortunately wounded.† Although unable to continue a personal superintendence, he possessed Lord Wellington's confidence so highly, that the attack was continued under his direction; and the commander-in-chief came every morning to his tent, accompanied by the staff-officers of the day, with the plan of the work executed and in progress, and consulted the colonel on the operations as they proceeded.

From this period of the siege the weather became most severe, and the rain came down in torrents. The labour in the trenches was consequently, both slowly and painfully executed; and nothing but the best spirit in the troops, united to an ardent zeal in the officers, enabled them to overcome difficulties, from which besiegers less determined would have recoiled. The customary task of excavation was easier far than the other duties entailed upon the working parties. Half the day was consumed in emptying the trenches of rain water; and the bottom became so

* Napier.

† "He was struck in the groin by a musket shot, fired within the distance of thirty or forty yards; but happily a silver dollar piece received the blow on its surface, and saved his life. Nevertheless the ball forced the dollar into the groin nearly an inch, and occasioned so severe a wound, as to deprive the army of his active personal services till almost the conclusion of the siege."—*Jones*.

muddy, that it was found necessary to have it artificially renewed by a layer of sandbags and fascines.

Throughout the 22d, the rain fell heavily; and at four in the afternoon, a torrent came down filling the trenches to an overflow. The floods rose fearfully; the pontoon bridge across the Guadiana was carried away; eleven of the pontoons sunk at their anchors, and the current became so rapid that the flying bridges could with difficulty work. It therefore became a question, if it would be possible to supply the army with provisions, and bring over the guns and ammunition for the attack; and serious apprehensions were entertained, that it would be necessary to withdraw from before the place.*

But difficulties appeared only to rouse the determination, and demonstrate the resources, which Lord Wellington so eminently possessed. By immense exertions the bridge was restored—on the night of the 24th, the breaching batteries were armed—and, at eleven o'clock on the morning of the 25th, the roar of artillery announced that the British guns had opened.

“The day’s firing, however, beyond breaking down some of the palisades in the covered-way, had produced very little visible effect on the defences of Fort Picurina; nevertheless the trenches being now well supported by a good parallel, and the batteries to enfilade all the faces and flanks of the place bearing on the Picurina fort being in full play, it was determined to assault and make a lodgment in that work this evening.”†

The enemy, as soon as they perceived what point was immediately threatened, had taken every means for strengthening it; and abandoning their works on the right bank, they deepened the ditch of the Picurina, and strengthened the gorge with a second row of palisades. They also formed galleries communicating with each other, and brought a reverse fire to flank the ditches. Under the three angles of the glacis they placed fougasses, and arranged

* Jones’s Journal of Sieges.

† Ibid.

upon the parapets loaded shells and barrels of combustibles, which were to be rolled among the assailants at the moment of assault; and that each man might have several pieces to discharge, 200 loaded muskets were ranged along the interior of the banquette.

The execution of the assault was thus detailed by Lord Wellington, in his despatch to Lord Liverpool:—

Dated, Camp before Badajoz, 26th March, 1812.

“ I directed Major-General Kempt, who commanded in the trenches on that afternoon, to attack La Picurina by storm, after it was dark that night, which service he effected in the most judicious and gallant manner.

“ The attack was made by 500 men of the 3d division, formed into three detachments, the right under the command of Major Shaw, of the 74th, the centre under Captain the Hon. H. Powys, of the 83d, and the left under Major Rudd, of the 77th. The communication between the outwork and the body of the place was entered on its right and left by the right and left detachments, each consisting of 200 men; half of each which detachments protected the attack from sallies from the fort, while the others attacked the work in its gorge.

“ It was first entered, however, by the centre detachment of 100 men, under the command of Captain the Hon. H. Powys, of the 83d regiment, who escalated the work at the salient angle, at a point at which the palisades had been injured by our fire. The detachment which attacked the work by the gorge had the most serious difficulties to contend with, as it was closed by not less than three rows of palisades, defended by musketry, and a place of arms for the garrison, musket proof, and loopholed throughout. When the attack upon the salient angle, however, succeeded, the whole got into the work.

“ The enemy's garrison in the outwork consisted of 250 men, with seven pieces of artillery, under the command of

Colonel Gaspartierre, of the Etat Major of the army of the South. But very few, if any, escaped: the colonel, three other officers, and 86 men have been taken prisoners, and the remainder were either killed by the fire of our troops, or drowned in the inundation of the river Rivillas.* The enemy made a sortie from the ravelin called San Roque, either with a view to recover La Picurina, or to protect the retreat of the garrison, but they were immediately driven in by the detachment stationed in the communication to protect the attack."

With the capture of the Picurina, the confusion of the night might have been expected to have terminated—but the garrison, apprehending a general assault, opened a tremendous fire of musketry and cannon, while the clang of the alarm-bell, and the hissing of rockets, increased an uproar which was continued till morning dawned.

The events of the succeeding ten days form but the history of a siege, in which the bold and continued operations of the assailants were opposed by all that science could devise, or gallantry effect. Before the crushing fire of the breaching batteries, the solid masonry of the bastions of La Trinidad and Santa Maria gradually gave way; and, on the morning of the 5th of April, the engineers reported to Lord Wellington that both breaches were practicable.

The near approach of Marshal Soult, whose advanced guards were already at Llerena, determined the allied general to assault Badajoz that evening. Accordingly, he made a close personal reconnaissance of the breaches; but the commanding engineer having reported that the enemy had retrenched the greater breach, and adopted the most effectual means for an obstinate resistance, Lord Wellington decided on deferring the attack for another day, and during

* On the eastern side, the arch of a bridge over the Rivillas, in the rear of the lunette of San Roque, had been built up; and the current, being thus impeded, formed an inundation between Fort Picurina and the glacis of the place, 200 yards in breadth, and perfectly impassable.

that interval, effect a third breach in the old curtain which connected the bastions against which his fire had hitherto been directed. Accordingly, on the morning of the 6th fourteen guns concentrated their fire on the escarpe, which they saw to its very base; and by four in the afternoon, the curtain was beaten down and the breach reported practicable.

Lord Wellington's plan of attack was originally confined to the storming of the bastions, and the carrying of the castle by escalade. The breach of La Trinidad was to be assaulted by the 4th division, under Major-General Colville, and that of Santa Maria, by the light, under Lieut-Colonel Barnard; while the 3d division were ordered to assail the castle. The ravelin of San Roque was also to be attempted by detachments of covering parties from the trenches; and to distract the attention of the garrison, a false alarm was to be made against the Pardaleras. The breach in the curtain induced Lord Wellington to enlarge his plan of attack; and, on the 6th, a memorandum was addressed to "Major-General Colville, to allot a portion of the advance of the 4th division to storm the breach in the curtain between the bastions Santa Maria and La Trinidad. Further, the garrison being hourly improving their defensive expedients, Lieut.-General Leith was directed to employ a brigade of the 5th division to escalade the bastion of St. Vincente, or the curtain and flank between it and the bridge over the Guadiana, and to be prepared to support this brigade with the remainder of his division."*

Phillipon had made every preparation to receive the assault, which his own observations led him to expect upon the night it was given, and which belief the intelligence of deserters had confirmed. The French governor "availed himself of the inability of the besiegers to destroy the counterscarps,—an operation they had neither time nor means of accomplishing,—and formed behind the breaches the most formidable obstructions which destructive inge-

* Jones's Journal of Sieges.

nity could devise. Night and day they were employed in clearing away the rubbish, destroying the ramps of the covered way, and making retrenchments behind the trenches. The fallen parapets were replaced with fascines, sand-bags, and wool-packs; casks filled with tarred straw, powder, and loaded grenades, were arranged along the trenches, and large shells with them. Immediately in front of the breaches at the foot of the counterscarp, 60 fourteen-inch shells were placed in a circular form, about four yards apart, and covered with some four inches of earth, and a communication formed to them with powder hoses placed between tiles in the manner of mine-tubes. *Chevaux de frise* were formed of sabre-blades; all the artillery stores were turned to account; and even a large boat was lowered into the ditch and filled with soldiers, to flank one of the breaches."*

The day passed, and every preparation for the assault was completed. The evening was dark and threatening,—twilight came,—the batteries ceased firing,—darkness fell,—and the trenches, though crowded with armed men, remained unusually quiet. Lights were seen occasionally flitting back and forward through the fortress, and the "All's well" of the French sentinels was distinctly heard. While waiting in readiness for the assault, the deep gloom which hitherto had shrouded the beleaguered city, was suddenly dissipated by a flight of fireworks, which rose over the town, and displayed every object around it.

The word was given to advance, and the 4th and light divisions issued from the trenches. "At that moment the deep bell of the cathedral of St. John struck ten; an unusual silence reigned around, and except the softened footsteps of the storming parties, as they fell upon the turf with military precision, not a movement was audible. A terrible suspense—a horrible stillness,—darkness,—a compression of the breathing,—the dull and ill-defined outline of the town,—the knowledge that similar and simultaneous

* Southey.

movements were making on other points,—the certainty that two or three minutes would probably involve the forlorn hope in ruin, or make it a beacon-light to conquest,—all these made the heart throb quicker, and long for the bursting of the storm, when victory should crown daring with success, or hope and life should end together.

“ On went the storming parties ; and one solitary musket was discharged beside the breach, but none answered it. The third division moved forward, closing rapidly up in columns at quarter distance. The ditch was gained,—the ladders were lowered,—on rushed the forlorn hope, with the storming party close behind them. The divisions were now on the brink of the sheer descent, when a gun boomed from the parapet. The earth trembled,—a mine was fired,—an explosion,—and an infernal hissing from lighted fusees succeeded,—and, like the rising of a curtain on the stage, in the hellish glare that suddenly burst out around the breaches, the French lining the ramparts in crowds, and the British descending the ditch, were placed as distinctly visible to each other as if the hour were noontide !”*

The explosion nearly annihilated the forlorn hope, and the heads of the storming party. For a moment, astounded by the deafening noise, the supporting troops held back ; but as if by a general impulse, some rushed down the ladders which had been lowered to the bottom of the ditch,—others leaped boldly in, reckless of the depth of the descent,—and while some mistook the face of an unfinished ravelin for the breach, which on gaining was found to be entirely separated from the ramparts, the rest struggled desperately up the breach, only to encounter at the summit a range of sword-blades, framed in beams too massive to be cut through, and secured by iron chains beyond the power of removal.

In this fearful situation, the courage of the assailants assumed a desperation that appears almost incredible :

* Victories of the British Armies.

officers and men in fast succession gained the summit, only to be shot down; and many perished in vain attempts to force an impassable barrier of bristling sword-blades. "The garrison never appeared intimidated nor to lose their decision and coolness for a moment on any point, for whilst some were repelling the assailants with their bayonets from the summits of the breaches, others continued to roll down with the greatest precision and effect, shells and fire-barrels on the men in the ditch below, and their tirailleurs unceasingly fired with accuracy and steadiness from cuts in the parapets between the points of contention.*

"Similar gallant efforts to those above described were frequently repeated to carry the breaches, but the combustibles prepared by the garrison seemed inexhaustible. Each time the assailants were opposed by appalling and destructive explosions, and each time were driven down with a great loss of officers and of the bravest soldiers.

"After several efforts the remaining men, discouraged by such constant repulses, could not be prevailed upon to make a further effort. Their situation in the ditch of a front, with an incessant fire upon them from the parapets, was most trying; still not an individual attempted to withdraw—they remained patiently to be slaughtered, though far too discouraged to make a fresh attempt to extricate themselves by forcing the breaches."†

But at other points bravery obtained success, and Badajoz was already carried. The 3d division crossed the Rivillas, surmounted the castle hill, and under a tremendous fire, planted their ladders. The boldest led the way,—and unappalled by a shower of shells and missiles, they gained the parapet. But there the French received them with the

* "Gathering in dark groups, and leaning on their muskets, the assailants looked up with sullen desperation at the Trinidad, while the enemy stepping out on the ramparts, and aiming their shots by the light of the fire-balls which they threw over, asked, as their victims fell, "*Why they did not come into Badajoz.*"—Napier.

† Jones's Journal of Sieges.

bayonet—while utterly incapable of resistance, they were hurled from the top, and crushed by huge stones and beams which, showered from the walls, destroyed any who survived the fall. Receding a few paces, the assailants formed again—two officers* caught up the ladders and the boldest men sprang after. Both reached the parapet unharmed,—the assailants swarmed up,—a firm footing was gained,—and the bayonet did the rest. Too late, a reinforcement detached by Phillipon reached the gate, and a sharp fusilade ensued in which Colonel Ridge was most unfortunately slain. But the French retired in despair, and the castle remained in the possession of the “fighting third.”

Badajoz, on that fearful night, was encircled by men, desperately resolute to force their way through the iron defences that opposed them. A heavy fire had been opened on the Pardaleras,—the bridge was assailed by the Portuguese,—and the more distant bastion of San Vincente, was at the same time escalated by Walker's brigade. After a desperate resistance, the French were driven along the ramparts, each bastion resolutely defended and each as bravely stormed.

In carrying the last, General Walker was severely wounded. A lighted port-fire having alarmed a soldier, he called out loudly that a mine was sprung, and a singular panic arose among troops, who but a few minutes before had braved death so recklessly. The whole gave ground, while General Veillard coming up with a French reinforcement, drove the affrighted soldiers along the rampart, and recovered possession of the works to the very bastion of San Vincente. But there, a weak battalion of the 38th had been held in reserve. Retaining their fire until the enemy closed, a shattering volley was delivered, and the regiment cheered and charged. Instantly the routed soldiers rallied—all advanced with renewed confidence—and the French, abandoning the defences, fled into the town followed by a part of the assailants.

* Lieut.-Colonel Ridge and Mr. Cauch.

Lord Wellington, previous to the assault, had stationed himself on the left of the Calemon, as the best point from which he could issue future orders for the conduct of the attack. Although the carcasses thrown from the town, by betraying the 3d division to the garrison, had precipitated the attack, with the exception of the 5th division whose ladders were delayed, all went forward correctly. The town clock announced the marching of the storming parties, and the roar of the artillery told that the conflict had begun. From a height beside the quarries, where Lord Wellington and his staff were standing, he saw the outline of the works, and "for a minute, the fireworks thrown from the place, showed the columns at the breaches. Darkness followed—stillness more horrible yet—and then the sudden burst of light, as shells and mines exploded. The main breach was literally in a blaze—sheets of fire mounted to the sky, accompanied by a continued roaring of hellish noises, as every villanous combustible was ignited to discover or destroy the assailants.

"The wounded came fast to the rear, but they could tell little how matters were progressing. At last, a mounted officer rode up. He was the bearer of evil tidings—the attack upon the breaches had failed—the majority of the officers had fallen—the men, left without leaders to direct them, were straggling about the ditch, and unless instant assistance was sent, the assault must fail entirely. Pale, but thoroughly undisturbed, the British general heard the disastrous communication, and issued orders to send forward a fresh brigade (Hay's) to the breaches. Half an hour passed, and another officer appeared. He came from Picton to say the castle had been carried by escalade, and that the 3d division were safe within the town."*

Lord Wellington instantly transmitted orders to hold the castle till the morning, and then blowing down the gates, to sally if necessary, and support a fresh assault.

* Victories of the British Armies.

No farther attempt to gain the breaches was required—and an officer was despatched to withdraw the columns, which was effected about midnight.

Resistance had ceased on the part of the garrison. Some irregular fighting occurred in the streets, but the intelligence of the capture of the castle at once occasioned an abandonment of the breaches—and Phillipon and Vieland, with part of the garrison, retired to San Christoval, where they surrendered on the first summons in the morning. At day-break the remnant of the 4th and light divisions entered the breaches unopposed; and Badajoz, after a well conducted defence, and a last and desperate effort to repulse an assault, fell to no ordinary conqueror.

Would that the story of that siege had ended with its capture; for “now commenced that wild and desperate wickedness which tarnished the lustre of the soldier’s heroism. Shameless rapacity, brutal intemperance, savage lust, cruelty and murder, shrieks and piteous lamentations, groans, shouts, imprecations, the hissing of fires bursting from the houses, the crashing of doors and windows, and the reports of muskets used in violence, resounded for two days and nights in the streets of Badajoz.”*

Who may not conceive the horrors attendant on the plunder of a captured town, when it is remembered that ten thousand furious and licentious madmen were loosed upon a helpless population, among which many of the loveliest women upon earth might be found? All within that devoted city was at the disposal of an infuriated army, over whom for the time control was lost, aided by an infamous collection of camp followers, who were, if possible, more sanguinary and pitiless even than those who had survived the storm!

“It is useless to dwell upon a scene from which the heart revolts. Few females in this beautiful town were saved that night from insult. The noblesse and the beggar—the nun, and wife and daughter of the artisan—youth and

* Napier.

age, all were involved in general ruin. None were respected, and few consequently escaped. The madness of those desperate brigands was variously exhibited; some fired through doors and windows; others at the church-bells; many at the wretched inhabitants as they fled into the streets to escape the bayonets of the savages who were demolishing their property within doors; while some wretches, as if blood had not flowed in sufficient torrents already, shot from the windows their own companions as they staggered on below. What chances had the miserable inhabitants of escaping death, when more than one officer perished by the bullets and bayonets of the very men whom but a few hours before he had led to the assault.”*

Badajoz, in point of fact, was doubly won, for the successes of either the 3d or 5th divisions would have rendered its fall inevitable. It is a singular circumstance, perhaps without a parallel in the events of sieges, that an army with a powerful artillery, after twenty days’ open trenches, and having formed three good practicable breaches in the body of a place, should at the moment of giving the assault employ two divisions on other points to escalate the defences where entire, and that each of the escalades should be crowned with complete success, whilst the efforts against the breaches were attended with utter discomfiture. Such an arrangement shows no very great confidence to have been placed in the main operation; and to the correct judgment formed on that head by Lord Wellington, with his firmness and resource, in seconding the assault by such unusual efforts, the army is indebted for its success against Badajoz.†

On the day of the investment the garrison consisted, by French returns, of 4,742 men. About 1,200 were rendered *hors de combat* during the siege, and 3,500 were made prisoners. The five French battalions in Badajoz had no eagles; but the colours of the garrison, with those

* Victories of the British Armies.

† Jones’s Journal of Sieges.

of theⁿ regiment of Hesse Darmstadt, were taken and transmitted by Lord Wellington to the Prince Regent.

The loss of the victors was most severe, for in the siege and storm nearly 5,000 men were killed and wounded.* Lieut.-Colonel M'Cleod of the 43d, and Major O'Hare of the 95th, died sword in hand in the breaches; and five generals, namely, Picton, Colville, Kempt, Walker, and Bowes, were wounded.

In reviewing this celebrated siege and assault, one feels at a loss whether to admire more that lofty flight of genius, which by greatly daring, and setting at nought all military maxims, effected what ordinary men would not attempt; or the matchless valour of British soldiers, which death, presented in every horrible variety, never could extinguish. That the attempt upon the breaches should not succeed one fact will easily explain.—When the columns arrived before them in the morning, no enemy to oppose, and with day-light to direct their entrance, time was required to remove the numerous obstacles which presented themselves, before a descent into the town was possible. Veiled in impenetrable darkness, and desperately defended, who could surmount those formidable barriers and live?

* "Return of the killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of General the Earl of Wellington, K.B., at the siege and capture of Badajoz, from the 18th March to 7th April, 1812, inclusive.

	Officers.	Serjeants.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	72	51	912	—	1035
Wounded	306	216	3265	—	3787
Missing	—	1	62	—	63

The Portuguese loss is included in the above numbers.

And the wonder is, not that the troops should fail in forcing a passage, but that when hope was over, they should firmly remain to be slaughtered by an enemy on whom they could not retaliate, and persevere to the last, until a formal order was delivered to recall them from that fatal breach. To account for the capture of the castle and San Vincente is difficult indeed. "In ordinary military reasoning such places would be considered secure from assault; but the efforts of the British troops occasionally set all calculation at defiance; and when a few years shall have swept away eye-witnesses of their achievements on this night, they will not be credited."*

During this memorable siege, 2,523 barrels of powder, each containing 90 pounds; 31,861 round shots; 1,826 common and spherical $5\frac{1}{2}$ inch shells; and 1,659 rounds of grape and case shot were expended. The reduction of Badajoz required 70,000 sand-bags; 1,200 gabions; 700 fascines, and 1,570 entrenching tools. Even a siege cannot be carried on without hard cash, and on this occasion Lord Wellington paid away 3,500 dollars!

It was a glorious triumph for the conqueror, and no doubt he felt it such. But glory may be bought too dear, and the most brilliant success is seldom unalloyed, for victory cannot be obtained without a sacrifice. "When the extent of the night's havoc was made known to Lord Wellington, the firmness of his nature gave way for a moment, and the pride of conquest yielded to a passionate burst of grief for the loss of his gallant soldiers."†

The first care of the victorious general was to apportion buildings for the use of his wounded men, and remove them thither, as speedily as circumstances would permit; and on the second day, finding that riot and drunkenness among the soldiery was unabated, Power's Portuguese brigade was marched in, and the provosts posted in the squares, with discretionary power to punish those whom they found

* Jones.

† Napier.

marauding. Order was promptly restored—head quarters removed to the city—the besieging park broken up—the guns and stores returned to Elvas, and the entrenching tools brought to the town. The immediate restoration of the damaged works were next proceeded with; and while his important conquest was placed in an attitude of defence, Lord Wellington allowed a short period of repose to his noble army, to enable it, with renewed vigour, to strain forward in the path of victory.



CHAPTER XXIX.

OPERATIONS OF SOULT AND MARMONT—AFFAIR AT USAGRE—GENERAL PROSPECTS OF LORD WELLINGTON—INTENDED PLAN OF OPERATIONS—PRESENT POSITION OF NAPOLEON—JOSEPH BUONAPARTE DISCONTENTED—ALTERATION IN SPANISH AFFAIRS—PARTY VIOLENCE IN ENGLAND—MURDER OF MR. PERCEVAL—LORD LIVERPOOL PRIME MINISTER—LORD WELLINGTON SELECTS THE NORTH FOR THE SCENE OF HIS OPERATIONS—BRIDGE AT ALMAREZ—ITS IMPORTANCE—DEFENCES AND SURROUNDING COUNTRY—EXPEDITION TO EFFECT ITS DESTRUCTION—ITS DIFFICULTY—HILL'S BOLDNESS AND ABILITY IS CROWNED WITH BRILLIANT SUCCESS—WORKS AND BRIDGE TOTALLY DESTROYED—LOSS SUSTAINED BY THE FRENCH—ALLIED CASUALTIES—SAFE RETREAT OF HILL'S CORPS—LORD WELLINGTON'S REPORT TO LORD LIVERPOOL.

ON the receipt of certain intelligence that Badajoz had fallen, Soult fell back to Llerena, followed by the allied cavalry under the command of Sir Stapleton Cotton, his intended junction with the Duke of Ragusa having failed. That marshal had advanced from Salamanca while Wellington was besieging Badajoz; had left one division to blockade Ciudad Rodrigo, and had invested Almeida with the remainder of his force. After vainly endeavouring to alarm the governor of Almeida by the demonstration of a sudden assault, he crossed the Coa at Sabugal, drove away a body of militia which would have opposed his advance, and penetrated to Castello Branco. But for the sudden and unexpected fall of Badajoz, and the approach of his active and indefatigable opponent, he would have pushed on to Villa Velha, to destroy, if possible, the bridge. He now retired into Spain, taking with him the division he had left before Rodrigo.*

On the night of the 10th, Drouet's rear-guard halted between Usagre and Villa Garcia; and it appeared to General Cotton that they might be successfully attacked,

* Sherer.

by reaching their encampment at day-break. The dispositions were ably made—and had the flank movement from Bienvenida been simultaneous with the front attack at Usagre,* the French retreat on Llerena would have been cut off. But though the march of Le Marchant's brigade was unavoidably delayed, the result of the affair reflected infinite credit on all concerned; and with few casualties,† a heavy loss was inflicted on the enemy.

* "The advanced guard of Major-General Anson's brigade drove in the enemy's pickets from near Usagre two hours sooner than I had intended, and General Le Marchant's brigade had not time to get into the rear of the enemy, who fell back, upon the alarm being given, a sufficient distance to secure his retreat upon Llerena.

"Lieut.-Colonel Ponsonby followed the enemy soon after day-break through Villa Garcia, and was skirmishing with him when General Le Marchant's brigade arrived on the other side of the heights between the Llerena road and Bienvenida: I desired Colonel Ponsonby would show only three squadrons, and endeavour to amuse the enemy in front, until Major-General Le Marchant's brigade (which I had sent Colonel Elley to conduct under cover of the heights) was prepared to attack the enemy in flank: this succeeded admirably; and the enemy, being vigorously attacked, at the same moment, in front and flank, retired in the greatest confusion and disorder. I pursued him with Major-General Anson's brigade, and one regiment of Major General Le Marchant's (the 5th dragoon guards), supported by the 3d and 4th dragoons, to near Llerena, a distance of four miles, during which the enemy's loss in killed was very considerable, and about 150 prisoners, including a lieutenant-colonel, two captains, and one lieutenant, with about 130 horses, were brought off the field.

"The enemy's cavalry formed on the right, and in rear of seven guns, and between 8,000 and 10,000 infantry, which had taken up a position on the left of and close to the town. The whole soon afterwards retired upon Berlanga and Asuaga, to the former of which places my patrols followed them."—*Cotton's Despatch to Graham, dated Santa Martha, 12th April, 1812.*

	Officers.	Serjeants.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	—	1	13	18	14
Wounded	2	4	35	9	41
Missing	—	—	2	1	2

The reduction of Rodrigo and Badajoz had opened an extended field for the future operations of the allied leader. A prompt march into Andalusia might have been considered as the first consequence of his recent success, and the fall of Seville would have formed a glorious pendent to the capture of the frontier fortresses. The army was burning for fresh service, and its condition, like its spirit, was admirable—every arm was perfect—the cavalry well-mounted, and the artillery superb. Prudence, however, forbade Lord Wellington from undertaking what he might have so confidently expected to effect.* Rodrigo was unprovisioned, its garrison mutinous, and the defences of Badajoz unrepaired. If he followed Soult towards Seville, and withdrew his divisions from the Guadiana, Marmont might fall suddenly on Rodrigo—an effort to which he would be fully equal, as a fresh train of siege artillery was on its way from France, to replace the battering guns taken in Badajoz. Lord Wellington therefore determined to secure the conquests he had already made; but at the same time, and by a different line of operations, achieve every advantage which he might probably have obtained by advancing to Seville.

Had the Spanish armies displayed enterprize and vigour, Lord Wellington would have been justified in marching into Andalusia, immediately on the fall of Badajoz; for Ciudad Rodrigo would not have been molested, nor the frontier been left in danger. But the feeble operations of Carlos d'España and Mendizabal had no terror for an enemy; and present and prospective motives convinced the allied general that the south was not the proper theatre of war. "He

* "If Ciudad Rodrigo had been provisioned as I had a right to expect, there was nothing to prevent me from marching to Seville at the head of 40,000 men, the moment the siege of Badajoz was concluded.

"If I were to march there under existing circumstances, the formidable position which I have acquired with so many sacrifices would undoubtedly be lost, and with that position, all the objects of the expedition into Andalusia. It remains then to be seen what is to be done under existing circumstances."

considered that as the harvest in Leon and Castile, that is to say, in the districts north of the Gredos and Gata mountains, was much later than in Estremadura and Andalusia, he should be enabled to preserve his commissariat advantages over the French in the field for a longer period in the north than in the south. And if he could strike a decisive blow against Marmont, he would relieve Andalusia as securely as by a direct attack, because Madrid would then fall, and Soult, being thus cut off from his communications with France, would fear to be hemmed in on all sides."*

To employ without delay the finest army he had yet commanded, was Lord Wellington's determination; and the time seemed fitting. Alarmed by the threatening attitude which Russia had assumed, Napoleon's attention had been directed from the Peninsula to the North; and at the moment when the tide of victory in Spain had turned,—when his armies had been defeated, and his strongholds lost,—he felt himself necessitated to weaken his lieutenants, by drafting the *élite* of their corps, to complete that magnificent host with which he tempted fortune too far, and madly wrought his ruin. Joseph, weary of the painful part he had enacted, was anxious to lay down a sceptre which had nothing of royalty but its tinsel, and seek in retirement that happiness which, with an uneasy crown, he had found so unattainable. Recent events had shown, that the possession of the Spanish capital depended no longer on the imperious pleasure of the emperor. The past campaign had taught a serious lesson; and the question was not how soon a French army should find its way to Lisbon, but how long Madrid was to be secure from the aggressions of a British one.

This change of circumstances abroad was encouraging; but at home, there was much to embarrass, and more to apprehend. Mr. Perceval, then at the head of the administration, was a zealous and upright minister; but with

* Napier.

every wish to support a contest on the Peninsula, he trembled at the responsibility which its enormous expenditure must entail upon a cabinet that advocated its continuance. The Whig party were hankering after office; Cobbett and the demagogues of the day clamoured incessantly; and, with truth suppressed, and falsehood unblushingly resorted to, the country was fevered by mistatements; and when success could not be denied, it was dashed by the gloomiest assurances that ulterior discomfiture was inevitable. No wonder, then, that "the people, deceived by both parties as to the nature of the war, and wondering how the French could keep the field at all, were, in common with the ministers, still doubtful if their commander was a truly great man, or an impostor."*

Lord Wellesley had retired in disgust from an administration whose policy he entirely disapproved of; but Mr. Perceval still held office. That was limited to a brief period. On the 11th of May, this unfortunate gentleman was assassinated in the lobby of the house, by a ruffian named Bellingham; and, to the eternal disgrace of England, not a few were found who evinced a sympathy for the murderer, and even justified the felon act that removed a well-meaning, but short-sighted adviser from the councils of his prince, and robbed an innocent family of the kindest of protectors. It was, indeed, a melancholy example of the extent to which political asperity will reach, in warping the judgment, and extinguishing the better feelings of men's nature.

On the death of Mr. Perceval, Lord Liverpool succeeded as prime minister; and it was reserved for him to witness that cloud of promise which had arisen no larger than a man's hand, gradually overspread the political horizon, until the evils attendant on a military despotism had yielded to the stronger influence of moral government, based upon religion, and fraught with civil liberty.

At this political juncture, Lord Wellington took the

* Napier.

field again. Having selected the north for the scene of his operations, a first care was to sever the corps of Soult and Marmont, and interrupt their communications. Below Arzobispo, the bridges on the Tagus had been broken, and the passage of the river was maintained by means of pontoons and boats, thrown across the stream at Almarez, by the French marshals, after its noble bridge had been destroyed. A post of such importance had not been neglected; and on both banks of the river strong works had been erected for its defence. On the left bank, a well-constructed *tête-du-pont* was overlooked by Fort Napoleon, a redoubt, having an interior entrenchment and loop-holed tower, and with nine heavy guns and a garrison of 400 men.—These defences were formidable—and the right bank was secured by a redoubt called Fort Ragusa, flanking the bridge, with which it was connected by a *flèche*. The only opening in the mountain passable for artillery is by the Puerto de Miravete, which, at a league's distance from the bridge, is commanded by a castle, now in ruins. This solitary route had more than military considerations to render it interesting. “A marked alteration of climate is perceptible upon crossing the narrow mountain-ridge over which the road passes. Coming from Castile, the traveller descends from this ridge into a country, where, for the first time, the gum-cistus appears as lord of the waste,—the most beautiful of all shrubs in the Peninsula for the profusion of its delicate flowers, and one of the most delightful for the rich balsamic odour which its leaves exude under a southern sun; but which overspreads such extensive tracts, where it suffers nothing else to grow, that in many parts both of Portugal and Spain it becomes the very emblem of desolation. The old castle stood at little distance from the road, on the summit of the sierra: the French had surrounded it by a lower *enceinte*, twelve feet high; they had fortified a large *venta*, or traveller's inn, upon the road, and had constructed two small works between

the inn and the castle, forming altogether a strong line of defence." *

The strength of the works, and the difficulty a mountain route added to an enterprize whose success was so much dependent on the rapidity of its execution, were not the only obstacles to be encountered. Several French corps were in the vicinity of Almaraz. Foy's had occupied again the valley of the Tagus, D'Armanac's was at Talavera, and Drouet's at Hinojosa de Cordova, with his cavalry nearer to Merida than Hill's division was to Almaraz, and consequently, in a position which would enable him to interrupt Sir Rowland's retreat. Lord Wellington, however, masked his intended operation by demonstrations calculated to mislead the French marshals, and induce a belief that an incursion into Andalusia was the object of these movements; and although an unexpected delay had been occasioned by repairing the bridge at Merida, Hill crossed the Guadiana on the 12th of May, with 6,000 men and 12 pieces of artillery. Being joined by the heavy howitzers belonging to the siege train, and a convoy with pontoons and scaling ladders, the English general reached Truxillo on the 15th, and early next morning continued his march to Jaraicejo.

Here the necessary dispositions to carry out his intended enterprize were completed, Sir Rowland having determined to reach the pass at Mirabete by a night march, and at the same moment attack the castle, the venta, and the works which protected the bridge. Against the former, the left column, under General Chowne, was directed; the right, under the command of Hill, was to march by the mountain paths of Romangordo, and carry Fort Napoleon by escalade; while the centre, under General Long, to which the cavalry and artillery were attached, moved forward by the royal road.

The steep and rugged routes by which the pass could only be approached, delayed the march of the columns; and as morning had dawned, the movement, as far as surprise had been intended, failed. On a closer examination

* Southey.

of the French defences, their strength was found to be much greater than what had been reported; and it was now ascertained that much time would be required to reduce either the castle or the venta. In this difficulty, Hill adopted the bold resolution of leaving his artillery on the heights; and while the left column made a false attack upon the castle, he determined to march direct upon the bridge, and without a gun, trust for success to "bold hearts and British bayonets."

It was a daring and a hazardous attempt; and one, under existing circumstances, that none but a military genius of high order would have adopted. The result was doubtful, but circumstances had left no alternative but the essay. The march of the English general through Truxillo had been communicated to the French commanders; and, at a distance of four marches from Merida, Hill had good reason to apprehend that Drouet, with overwhelming numbers, would move rapidly to Medellin, and endeavour to intercept his retreat. The danger was great, but it did not deter him; and, on the evening of the 18th, he marched on his daring enterprize.

The right column had consisted of the 50th, 71st, and 92d regiments; but it was reinforced from that of the centre with the 6th Portuguese, a company of riflemen, and a detachment of gunners. At dusk, the division descended from the Sierra; but though the distance was not above two leagues, the whole night was consumed in traversing the valley; and when the head of the column halted under cover of some hillocks which hid it from the enemy, the rear was still winding slowly through a path, which no foot save the shepherd's had ever trod before.

While waiting for the straggling sections to come up, the opening roar of cannon announced that Chowne's false attack on Mirabete had commenced. "Pillars of white smoke rose on the lofty brow of the Sierra, the heavy sound of artillery came rolling over the valley, and the garrison of Fort Napoleon, crowding on the ramparts, were

anxiously gazing at these portentous signs of war, when, quick and loud, a British shout broke on their ears, and the gallant 50th regiment, aided by a wing of the 71st, came bounding over the nearest hills."*

Although astonished at the suddenness of the assault, the French were ready to repel it. A villager had already brought them intelligence of Hill's approach, and a cavalry picket, in British uniform, had been discovered on the mountain. In consequence, the garrison of Fort Napoleon had been reinforced; and they instantly opened a heavy discharge from small arms and artillery, which the guns on Fort Ragusa supported by a flanking fire, until the ground immediately in front of the rampart sheltered the assailants from its effects.

The assault was splendidly successful, for nothing could check the ardour with which it was given. In a few minutes the parapet was escaladed; and the inner defences, after a brief resistance were abandoned, the garrison flying for shelter to the *tête-du-pont*. But, with dashing gallantry, the leading files of the assailants bore rapidly onwards, and entered the work intermingled with the fugitives from the fort; and in a rush across the bridge, which had been previously injured by the sinking of several of its pontoons, many of the French perished in the river. The panic of the garrison of Fort Ragusa was increased by the fire of Fort Napoleon; and although the redoubt was secure, the commandant abandoned it most disgracefully,† and added its defenders to the fugitive troops who were hurrying towards Naval Moral. "The river was soon passed; the towers and magazines in the forts, and in the *tête-du-pont*, were blown up; the guns thrown into the Tagus; the palisades, barriers, stores of timber and of tools, the pontoons and their carriages, were consumed by fire, and the works utterly effaced and destroyed."

* Napier.

† The unfortunate man was brought to trial for cowardice, and was condemned and shot at Talavera.

In addition to the destruction of the bridge and works, attended with a severe loss in killed and drowned, 260 prisoners were taken, including the governor and sixteen officers. A colour belonging to the 4th battalion of the *corps étranger* was captured by the 71st; and the whole was achieved with a loss comparatively trifling.*

Separated from the right bank of the Tagus, the castle and works at Mirabete must have fallen had Hill ventured to attack them; but within the reach of several French corps, and alarmed by a groundless report from Sir William Erskine, that Soult with his united divisions was actually in Estremadura, the English general very prudently retreated † on the 21st, and reached Merida safely on the 26th. Having effected the object of his expedition, there was nothing to be gained equivalent to the risk it must involve; “and the possession of the mountain forts would have not made amends for the valuable blood which must have been shed in taking them.” ‡

Of Lord Wellington's lieutenants none was more popular than Sir Rowland Hill; and the issue of his enter-

* Return of the killed, wounded, and missing of the army under the command of his Excellency General the Earl of Wellington, K.B., under the immediate orders of Lieut.-General Sir R. Hill, K.B., at the storm and capture of Fort Napoleon, and the enemy's other works in the neighbourhood of Almaraz, on the morning of the 19th May, 1812.

	Officers.	Sergeants.	Rank and File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	2	1	30	—	33
Wounded	13	10	121	—	144
Missing	—	—	—	—	—

† “Both Soult and Marmont had put their forces in motion as soon as they were informed of Sir Rowland's march: the latter arrived upon the Tagus too late to prevent the evil, and without the means of repairing it; the former, when he found that the allies had passed Truxillo on their return, gave up the hope of intercepting them.”

‡ Hill's Despatch to Wellington.

prize gave unfeigned satisfaction to the army. From him who had planned it, he received the praise his admirable conduct had so richly deserved; and in transmitting the despatch to Lord Liverpool, the allied commander thus expressed his approbation:—

“I have the honour to enclose Sir R. Hill's report of this brilliant exploit; and I beg to draw your lordship's attention to the difficulties with which he had to contend, as well from the nature of the country, as from the works which the enemy had constructed, and to the ability and characteristic qualities displayed by Lieut.-General Sir R. Hill, in persevering in the line, and confining himself to the objects chalked out by his instructions, notwithstanding the various obstacles opposed to his progress.

“I have nothing to add to Lieut.-General Sir R. Hill's report of the conduct of the officers and troops under his command, excepting to express my concurrence in all he says in their praise. Too much cannot be said of the brave officers and troops who took by storm, without the assistance of cannon, such works as the enemy's forts on both banks of the Tagus, fully garrisoned, and in good order, and defended by 18 pieces of artillery.”*

* Despatch, dated Fuente Guinaldo, 28th May, 1812.

CHAPTER XXX.

ADVANTAGES ATTENDANT UPON HILL'S SUCCESS—LORD WELLINGTON CROSSES THE AGUEDA—CIUDAD RODRIGO—AFFAIR AT VALMASA—SALAMANCA—ALLIES CROSS THE TORMES, AND LORD WELLINGTON ENTERS THE CITY—MARMONT RETIRES TO FUENTE EL SAUCO—FORTIFIED CONVENTS—LORD WELLINGTON INVESTS THEM—PROGRESS OF THE SIEGE—ASSAULT FAILS—MARMONT ADVANCES TO RELIEVE HIS GARRISONS—HIS OPERATIONS—THE FORTS SURRENDER—DESPATCH TO LORD LIVERPOOL—MARMONT RETREATS—CASUALTIES OF THE ALLIES—REJOICINGS IN SALAMANCA—LORD WELLINGTON REJOINS THE ARMY.

HILL's success at Almaraz was but the opening movement to a course of splendid victory; for while, by the destruction of that bridge, the communication between Soult and Marmont was completely interrupted, Lord Wellington facilitated his intended operations by repairing the ruined arch at Alcantara. By this, the best and shortest routes were secured for an advance; and while Hill's corps was immediately at hand, Drouet's would have required ten marches to unite it with that of Marmont.

Early in June, all was prepared for active operations; and Lord Wellington with the allied army crossed the Agueda on the 13th. To some of the troops the route leading through Rodrigo was interesting; and many indications of "siege and storm" were still apparent. "Its environs presented a gloomy picture of the effects of war on every thing near to an armed place subjected to such devastating visitations. The public walk, deprived of the foliage that had given it beauty and shade, looked bare, sterile, and deserted; the trees had fallen for the purpose of giving scope to the un-

interrupted sweep of artillery ; roofless houses and battered walls presented themselves in all directions. The earth, thrown up to shelter the troops, still exhibited the rugged and bare aspect attendant on its being replaced without much attention to natural beauty or convenience. The great square contained dismounted cannon, shattered wheels, and ruined tumbrils ; while the effects of bombardment had torn up and rendered unequal its former smooth and level area.”*

The weather was fine, and as the route lay principally through forest lands, nothing could be more picturesque and beautiful than the country which the line of march presented. The wooded landscape displayed its verdure under the sunny influence of a cloudless sky, and singularly contrasted its summer green with the snow-topped pinnacles of the Sierra de Gata. No enemy appeared—for days the march was leisurely continued—until, on clearing the forest at Valmasa, the German hussars in advance had a slight skirmish with a French picket.

The enemy's cavalry, few at first, gradually showed themselves, extending in detached parties over the plain ; while others, occupying the rising grounds that flanked it, indicated that they intended to allow no inferior force to oblige them to retire. The British horsemen rode forward, and a sharp combat succeeded, marked with all that animation which attends a cavalry affair. “ Parties were observed firing or charging in all directions. Repeated attacks were made by either force, as circumstances warranted, or as they became most numerous at the particular points. In one direction was to be seen a troop or squadron charging half their number of opponents, who, by a precipitate retreat, fell back on others, until their strength became superior, when, in turn, they for a time carried with them the successful tide of battle. The plain was covered with officers and scattered cavalry soldiers ; carbines and pistols were discharged without intermission ; and frequent personal conflicts took place. On one occasion, Major Brotherton,

* Leith Hay.

of the 14th light dragoons, mounted upon a very small Spanish horse, crossed swords with a French officer of chasseurs, and continued cutting and parrying until the *mêlée* broke up the encounter."* With evening the skirmish closed; the enemy retiring across the Tormes, and the allies bivouacking on its banks, overlooked by a city already venerable from its antiquity, famed as a seat of learning,† and which was destined shortly to obtain a different and a more enduring celebrity.

Salamanca stands in a commanding situation on the right bank of the Tormes, a river of considerable magnitude there, which rises near the Sierra de Tablada in Old Castile, and falls into the Douro on the Portuguese frontier, opposite Bemposta. The country round is open, without trees, and with a few villages interspersed, in which the houses are constructed of clay. On the left of the river there are extensive pastures, on the right a wide and unenclosed corn country. The pastures are common, and the arable land occupied after a manner not usual in other parts

* Leith Hay.

† "In its best days, it is said to have contained no fewer than 8,000 native students, and 7,000 from foreign countries: when the present war began, the number little exceeded 3,000, among whom a few Irish were the only foreigners. The population consisted of some 3,400 families: it had once been much greater. But Salamanca was still an important and a famous place: popular fiction had made its name familiar to those who are unacquainted with its history; while to the antiquary, the historian, and the philosopher, it is a city of no ordinary interest. The Roman road which extended from thence to Merida, and so to Seville, may still be traced in its vicinity: its bridge of twenty-seven arches, over the Tormes, is said to be in part a Roman work. The Mozarabic liturgy is retained in one of its churches. Its cathedral, though far inferior to some of the older edifices, whether of Moorish or Gothic architecture, in Spain, is a large and imposing structure. Twenty-five parish churches are inclosed within its walls, twenty convents of monks or friars, eleven of nuns: these, with its numerous colleges, give it an imposing appearance from without, and a melancholy solemnity within. Nowhere, indeed, were there more munificent endowments for education, and for literature, and for religion. It is a popular belief in Spain, that the Devil also has his college at Salamanca, where students of the black art take their degrees in certain caverns, every seventh being left with him, in earnest of the after-payment to which they all are bound."—*Southey*.

of Spain : it is cultivated in annual allotments, and reverts to the commonalty after the harvest.

On the morning of the 17th, the allies crossed the Tormes by the fords of Santa Martha and Los Cantos; and Lord Wellington entered Salamanca at the head of his victorious troops. " Nothing could be more animating than the scene. The day was brilliant, presenting all the glowing luxuriance of a southern climate. Upwards of fifty staff officers accompanied the British general; they were immediately followed by the 14th dragoons and a brigade of artillery; the streets were crowded to excess; signals of enthusiasm and friendship waved from the balconies; the entrance to the Plaza was similar to a triumph; every window and balcony was filled with persons welcoming the distinguished officer to whom they looked up for liberation and permanent relief. Lord Wellington dismounted, and was immediately surrounded by the municipality, and the higher orders of the inhabitants, all eager to pay him respect and homage. At the same moment, the 6th division of British infantry entered the south-west angle of the square. It is impossible to describe the electric effect produced under these circumstances by the music; as the bands of the regiments burst in full tones on the ear of the people, a shout of enthusiastic feeling escaped from the crowd, all ranks seeming perfectly inebriated with exultation.

" From this scene, so calculated to distract the attention of ordinary men, Lord Wellington retired to make immediate arrangements for reducing the forts. A plan of them having been produced and placed in his hands by the Spaniards, he left the adulating crowd, escaping from the almost overwhelming demonstrations of friendship and respect with which he was greeted; and before the town had recovered from its confusion and its joy, or the 'vivas' had ceased to resound, his system of attack was decided upon, and the necessary orders for its execution issued to the troops."*

* Leith Hay.

Marmont, on the preceding night, had evacuated the city, and with a cavalry corps and two divisions of infantry retreated leisurely to Fuente el Saucó, followed by the allied advanced guard; while, with the exception of Clinton's division, which remained in Salamanca to invest the forts, the whole of the army of Lord Wellington took a position on the Sierra of San Christoval.

In a city of convents and colleges, there could be no difficulty in finding buildings equally adapted as well from their situation, as the solidity with which they had been constructed, for being converted into places of defence. Marmont had ruined thirty-five edifices, and fortified with the timber and materials they afforded three convents,* of which that of San Vicente was the principal. Placed on a sheer rock which overhung the Tormes, and severed by a deep ravine from other edifices, it had every capability of being rendered formidable, and the French engineers displayed considerable skill in its defence. It was secured in front by palisades, and on the re-entering angle by a fascine battery—while the windows were built up and crenellated—and no pains spared in the application of the necessary labour and materials which could secure it from aggression.

“ On the opposite bank of a rivulet tributary to the Tormes, the convents of Los Cayetanos and La Merced had been converted with great skill into two redoubts, with well-covered perpendicular escarpes, deep ditches, and casemated counterscarps; they were also full of bomb proofs, made by supporting a roof horizontally and vertically with strong beams, and covering it with six feet of earth. These works were seen at once to be far more respectable than Lord Wellington had expected to find, his information amounting to little more than that some convents had been

* “ It is impossible to describe the joy of the people of the town upon our entrance. They have now been suffering for more than three years; during which time the French, among other acts of violence and oppression, have destroyed 13 of 25 convents, and 22 of 25 colleges, which existed in this celebrated seat of learning.”—*Wellington Despatch*.

fortified. It was necessary to reduce them before the army could advance, but the means of attack had been provided on this inadequate knowledge : they consisted of only four iron eighteen-pounders and four twenty-four pounder iron howitzers, with an hundred rounds for each. The engineers had only 400 intrenching-tools, without any stores ; there were present three engineer officers, with nine men of the corps of royal military artificers ; and the works were soon found to be even more formidable than they appeared.”*

To the sixth division the details of the siege were committed. Ground was broken before San Vicente on the night of the 17th ; on the 19th a battery commenced breaching, and with two field pieces placed on the roof of San Bernardo, which overlooked the fort, seven guns were turned on the devoted convent.

On the 20th, iron howitzers arrived from Elvas, and their fire was added to that previously maintained ; but the building appeared unshaken, and its loopholed wall poured forth an incessant *tiraillade* from every crevice,—“ when, in a moment, on one discharge of the battery, the wall and roof of the building, with its numerous inhabitants, were precipitated to the earth with a tremendous crash ; a cloud of dust and lime cleared away to exhibit a shapeless heap of ruin ; while its brave garrison, stationed in that part of the building, were buried and invisible in the mass which alone appeared.”

To increase the confusion of the French, carcasses were thrown in with the design of firing the wood-work of the fort ; but the defenders, with amazing determination, succeeded in extinguishing the flames, while they supported an unceasing fusilade, by which the assailants suffered heavily.

On the night of the 23d, the fire of the British guns established on the right bank of the Tormes had made no decisive impression ; but as time was invaluable, and Lord Wellington seemed determined to let nothing induce him to move forward until the forts had fallen, an attempt was

* Southey.

made to carry Los Cayetanos and La Merced by escalade. The attack failed, and the loss sustained was considerable. A very valuable officer perished on the occasion: General Bowes, already wounded, was under the surgeon's hands when it was reported that the troops were giving way;—he instantly hastened to the post of danger, and died sword in hand in the *mêlée*.

In the meantime Marmont, having collected four divisions and a brigade of cavalry at El Sauco, advanced to relieve his isolated garrisons. On his approach, the allied army, strengthened by a brigade of the fifth division taken from the siege, formed in battle order on the heights of San Christoval; while, for security, the battering guns were moved across the Tormes. The summit of San Christoval was flat, and covered with a luxuriant crop of grain ready for the sickle, and the Tormes swept round the reverse of the position, touching both its flanks. The villages of Villares and Monte Rubio were behind the left of the hill—Cabrerizos on the right—and Christoval, Castellanos, and Moresco in front and at the foot of the ascent. The position was about four miles long, commanding an expanse of country on every side; but it had neither wood nor water, and as the weather was sultry, the troops suffered from the scarcity of both.

In the afternoon the French cavalry manœuvred as if they intended to turn the left of the position, while Marmont advanced with the mass of his army against the right. At night the allied pickets had been forced back; and the French remained in possession of Moresco, and rested on their arms within cannon range of the English divisions.

Lord Wellington, wrapped in his cloak, lay on the ground that night.* The period of repose was short, for

* "The country was unwooded, and the only shelter from an ardent sun was obtained by stretching blankets over sticks, and securing the edges to the ground. For this simple luxury Lord Wellington was indebted to a private of the 43d, as his own accommodation was on a par with the humblest soldier."
—*Victories of the British Armies.*

with the first blush of morning both armies got under arms. All, however, continued quiet until evening, when an affair occurred between the 68th regiment and the French who were posted in the village of Moresco. Throughout the day Marmont had been endeavouring to signalize the forts, and was constantly occupied in reconnoitering Lord Wellington's position.

Having received reinforcements, increasing his army to fully 40,000 men, the French marshal moved by his left on the 22d, and seized a height which overlooked the right of the allies. To secure a view of the British position, however, was the only advantage he obtained; for on the approach of the seventh division, under Sir Thomas Graham, he retired from the heights, and took a new position two leagues in the rear,—his centre being at Aldea Rubia, and his flanks resting on Cabeza Velloso and Huerta. By this new disposition, Marmont would have had the power of crossing the river, and opening a communication by the left bank with his imprisoned garrisons; but his able antagonist as promptly effected a movement of his troops, and thus obtaining a command of both banks of the Tormes, covered Salamanca completely.

The 23d passed without any hostile demonstration on either side: but at day-light on the 24th, a spattering fusilade, succeeded by the booming of artillery, told that the French had passed the river, and that Bock's cavalry were attacked. "After a time the fog cleared up, and the German horsemen were seen in close and beautiful order, retiring before twelve thousand French infantry, who in battle array were marching steadily onwards. At intervals, twenty guns, ranged in front, would start forwards and send their bullets whistling and tearing up the ground beneath the Germans, while scattered parties of light cavalry, scouting out, capped all the hills in succession, and peering abroad, gave signals to the main body."*

Graham with two divisions, and Le Marchant's cavalry,

* Napier.

were instantly detached across the Tormes, and formed in order of battle; while Wellington collected the remainder of his army between Moresco and Cabrerizos, in readiness to avail himself of any false movement of his rival. But when the allied dispositions were discovered, the French marshal hesitated to risk an action, and repassing the river, he occupied the position he had quitted.

It was Marmont's determination to offer battle on the 28th; but Lord Wellington, having obtained the siege stores he required from Almeida, pressed the forts so vigorously, that they yielded on the 27th; and the particulars of their fall were thus detailed to Lord Liverpool in a despatch, dated Fuente la Pena, 30th June, 1812.

“ The ammunition to enable us to carry on the attack of the forts having arrived at Salamanca in the afternoon of the 26th, the fire was immediately recommenced upon the gorge of the redoubt of Los Cayetanos, in which a practicable breach was effected at about ten o'clock in the morning of the 27th; and we had succeeded nearly about the same time in setting fire to the buildings in the large fort of San Vicente, by the fire from which the approach to Los Cayetanos by its gorge was defended.

“ Being in Salamanca at this moment, I gave directions that the forts of Los Cayetanos and La Merced should be stormed; but some little delay occurred in consequence of the commanding officer of these forts in the first instance, and afterwards the commanding officer of San Vicente, having expressed a desire to capitulate after the lapse of a certain number of hours.

“ As it was obvious that these propositions were made in order to gain time till the fire in San Vicente should be extinguished, I refused to listen to any terms, unless the forts should be instantly surrendered; and having found that the commanding officer of Los Cayetanos, who was the first to offer to surrender, was entirely dependent upon the governor of San Vicente, and could not venture to carry

into execution the capitulation which he had offered to make, I gave directions that his fort and that of La Merced might be stormed forthwith.

“ These operations were effected in the most gallant manner by a detachment of the sixth division, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Davis of the 36th regiment, under the direction of Major-General Clinton.

“ The troops entered the fort of Los Cayetanos by the gorge, and escalated that of La Merced ; and I am happy to add that our loss was but trifling.

“ The governor of San Vicente then sent out a flag of truce to ratify the surrender of that fort on the terms I had offered him, viz.: the garrison to march out with the honours of war ; to be prisoners of war ; and the officers to retain their personal military baggage, and the soldiers their knapsacks : and notwithstanding that the 9th regiment of caçadores had actually stormed one of the outworks of San Vicente, and were in possession of it, I deemed it expedient to accept the fort by capitulation on those terms, and to stop the attack. * * * *

“ The enemy had been employed for nearly three years in constructing these works, but with increased activity for the last eight or nine months. A large expense had been incurred ; and these works, sufficiently garrisoned by about 800 men, and armed with 30 pieces of artillery, were of a nature to render it quite impossible to take them, excepting by a regular attack ; and it is obvious that the enemy relied upon their strength, and upon their being sufficiently garrisoned and armed ; as they had left in San Vicente large depôts of clothing, and military stores of every description.

“ I was mistaken in my estimate of the extent of the means which would be necessary to subdue these forts ; and I was obliged to send to the rear for a fresh supply of ammunition. This necessity occasioned a delay of six days.

“ The enemy withdrew their garrison from Alba de Tormes as soon as they heard of the fall of the forts of

Salamanca; and I have ordered that the works at both places may be destroyed.

“The operations against the forts of Salamanca were carried on in sight of Marshal Marmont’s army, which remained in its position with the right at Cabeza Velloso, and the left at Huerta, till the night of the 27th instant, when they broke up, and retired in three columns towards the river Duero; one of them directing its march upon Toro, and the others upon Tordesillas.”

The fall of the forts was communicated to Marmont on the evening of the 27th; and he received intelligence at the same time that Caffarelli’s expected reinforcement was delayed. The object for which he had advanced had failed—and it would have been impolitic to abide a battle now—accordingly he retreated during the night by the roads of Torro and Tordesillas, taking with him the garrison he had placed in the castle of Alba de Tormes.

The reduction of the forts of Salamanca occasioned a considerable loss, for 540 men had been rendered *hors de combat*, from the passage of the Tormes to the fall of San Vicente.* “When it was ascertained that Marshal Marmont had retired, a Te Deum was performed in the cathedral, at which Lord Wellington, accompanied by a numerous body of the officers of his army, attended. The scene was grand and impressive, the spacious noble building

* Return of the killed, wounded, and missing of the army under the command of General the Earl of Wellington, K.B., in the siege of the Forts of San Vicente, Los Cayetanos, and La Merced, and in the position on the heights of Villares, from the 16th to the 27th June, 1812, inclusive.

	Officers.	Serjeants.	Rank & File.	Horses.	Total loss of Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Rank and File.
Killed	6	5	104	28	115.
Wounded	28	44	340	—	412
Missing	2	—	11	5	13

crowded to excess, and the ceremony performed with all the pomp and splendour of Catholic worship. The pealing organ never poured its tones over a more brilliant, varied, or chivalrous audience. To describe the variety of groups would be endless: the eye, wandering through the expanse of the building, could seldom rest twice on objects of similarity.

“ All the pomp of a great episcopal seat was displayed on the occasion. Contrasted with the sombre dresses of the numerous unofficiating clergy, the scarlet uniforms of the British were held in relief by the dark Spanish or Portuguese costume. The Spanish peasant, in all the simplicity and cleanliness of his dress, appeared by the mustached and fierce-looking guerilla; while the numerous mantillas and waving fans of the Spanish ladies attracted attention to the dark voluptuous beauties of Castile. It was an enthusiastic and imposing scene; nor was its least impressive effect produced by the quiet, unassuming presence of the great man who, in the career of his glory, knew that by showing respect to the religious institutions of other countries, he best secured for himself those feelings which are only to be substantially acquired by deference to the customs of a people having an equal right with ourselves to adopt the persuasion or the forms most congenial to their minds, and most consistent with their conscientious views.”*

The adulation of “ a giddy crowd ” had no charms for one whose mind was centered upon objects, from which the evanescent displays of popular approbation could never for a moment distract it. Ordering that the city forts should be razed, and the castle of Alba dismantled, Lord Wellington quitted Salamanca on the evening of the 28th, and on the 29th rejoined the army.

* Leith Hay.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LORD WELLINGTON ADVANCES TO THE GUAREÑA—BOTH ARMIES ANXIOUS FOR A BATTLE—WINE CAVES OF RUEDA—MARMONT ASSUMES THE OFFENSIVE—DETAIL OF OPERATIONS BETWEEN THE DUERO AND THE TORMES—AFFAIR OF CASTREJON—NARROW ESCAPE OF LORD WELLINGTON—OPERATIONS FROM THE 19TH TO THE 21ST OF JULY—THUNDER STORM—MORNING OF THE 22D—MARMONT'S FALSE MOVEMENT BRINGS ON THE BATTLE OF SALAMANCA—DESPATCH TO LORD BATHURST—OBSERVATIONS.

WHILE all in Salamanca evinced that joyous excitement which victory elicits, Lord Wellington was preparing for a greater triumph; and the allied army was already on its march, and reached the Guareña on the 30th of June. On the 1st of July it encamped on the Trabancos, and on the 2d crossed the Zapardial, driving the French rear-guard in great confusion over the Tordesillas. The period that intervened from the 3d to the 15th, was marked by a few changes of position; but no serious affair took place until the junction of Bonnet's division from the Asturias, with a strong cavalry reinforcement, encouraged Marmont to extend by his right along the banks of the Duero,* and

* The river occasionally written Douro and Duero, rises in a mountain lake in Old Castile, and passes in its course the site of the ancient Numantia. At Simancas, it is joined by the Pisuerga, into which the Arlanza and Carrion had previously discharged themselves. Then, by a south-westerly course it runs to Tordesillas, and turning afterwards towards the west, passes through Toro and Zamora. Fed by the minor streams of Leon, the Duero enters Portugal, and, after the most lengthened course of the Peninsular rivers, falls into the Atlantic at Oporto.

occasioning the allies to make a correspondent movement, head-quarters were changed from Rueda to Nava del Rey. On the 16th, the French marshal passed two divisions across the bridge at Toro, and the allied general occupied Fuente la Peña and Canizal, the fourth and light divisions taking a position at Castrejon.

At no period of the campaign was the excitement in both armies raised to a greater pitch. The allies were flushed with victory, and confident of fresh success—the enemy, receiving daily an accession to their strength, and burning to wipe away the disgrace attendant upon their recent discomfitures. Marmont courted an action upon ground on which, from its being favourable for defence, he knew that his adversary must attack him at disadvantage—while Wellington, as ardent for a battle, but with a resolution not to be disturbed, refused to throw away a chance, and coolly waited until he could deal a blow that should be decisively effective. No time could be fraught with more military interest than that when the rival armies were in each other's presence on the Duero. "The weather was very fine, the country rich, and the troops received their rations regularly; wine was so plentiful, that it was hard to keep the soldiers sober; the caves of Rueda, either natural or cut in the rock below the surface of the earth, were so immense and so well stocked, that the drunkards of two armies failed to make any very sensible diminution in the quantity. Many men of both sides perished in that labyrinth, and on both sides also, the soldiers, passing the Duero in groups, held amicable intercourse, conversing of the battles that were yet to be fought: the camps on the banks of the Duero seemed at times to belong to one army, so difficult is it to make brave men hate each other."*

This state of inaction was hurrying to its close. Marmont had determined to resume the offensive; and having masked his design by deceptive movements for some days, he

* Napier.

commenced a series of operations, well conceived and ably executed, but which the superior genius of his opponent rendered nugatory in their results. After alluding to the movement of the French troops by their right, in his despatch to Lord Bathurst,* the allied general thus details the succeeding operations:—

“ It was totally out of my power to prevent the enemy from passing the Duero at any point at which he might think it expedient, as he had in his possession all the bridges over that river, and many of the fords; but he recrossed that river at Toro in the night of the 16th, moved his whole army to Tordesillas, where he again crossed the Duero on the morning of the 17th, and assembled his army on that day at La Nava del Rey; having marched not less than ten leagues in the course of the 17th.

“ The 4th and light divisions of infantry, and Major-General Anson's brigades of cavalry, had marched to Castrejon on the night of the 16th, with a view to the assembly of the army on the Guareña, and were at Castrejon under the orders of Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton on the 17th, not having been ordered to proceed further, in consequence of my knowledge that the enemy had not passed the Duero at Toro, and there was not time to call them in between the hour at which I received the intelligence of the whole of the enemy's army being at La Nava and daylight of the morning of the 18th. I therefore took measures to provide for their retreat and junction, by moving the 5th division to Torrecilla de la Orden; and Major-General Le Marchant's, Major-General Alten's, and Major-General Bock's brigades of cavalry to Alaejos.

“ The enemy attacked the troops at Castrejon at the dawn of day of the 18th, and Sir Stapleton Cotton maintained the post without suffering any loss till the cavalry had joined him. Nearly about the same time the enemy turned, by Alaejos, the left flank of our position at Castrejon.

* Dated Cabrerizos, 21st July, 1812.

“ The troops retired in admirable order to Torrecilla de la Orden, having the enemy’s whole army on their flank, or in their rear, and thence to the Guareña, which river they passed under the same circumstances, and effected their junction with the army.*

“ The Guareña, which runs into the Duero, is formed by four streams, which unite about a league below Cañizal, and the enemy took a strong position on the heights on the right of that river; and I placed the 5th, 4th, and light divisions on the opposite heights, and had directed the remainder of the army to cross the Upper Guareña at Vallesa, in consequence of the appearance of the enemy’s intention to turn our right.

“ Shortly after his arrival, however, the enemy crossed the Guareña at Castrillo, below the junction of the streams; and manifested an intention to press upon our left, and to enter the valley of Cañizal. Major-General Alten’s brigade of cavalry, supported by the 3d dragoons, were already engaged with the enemy’s cavalry, and had taken, among other prisoners, the French General de Carrié; and I desired Lieut.-General the Hon. L. Cole to attack with Major-General William Anson’s and Brig.-General Harvey’s brigades of infantry, the latter under the command of Colonel Stubbs, the enemy’s infantry, which were supporting their cavalry. He immediately attacked and defeated

* Return of the killed, wounded, and missing of the army under the command of General the Earl of Wellington, K.B., near Castrejon, on the 18th July, 1812.

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.
British	61	297	27
Portuguese	34	96	27
Total	95	393	54

them with the 27th and 40th regiments, which advanced to the charge with bayonets, Colonel Stubbs's Portuguese brigade supporting; and the enemy gave way—many were killed and wounded—and Major-General Alten's brigade of cavalry having pursued the fugitives, 240 prisoners were taken.

* * * * *

“The enemy did not make any further attempt on our left, but having reinforced their troops on that side, and withdrawn those which had moved to their left, I brought back ours from Vallesa.

“On the 19th, in the afternoon, the enemy withdrew all the troops from their right, and marched to their left by Tarazona, apparently with an intention of turning our right. I crossed the Upper Guareña at Vallesa and El Olmo, with the whole of the allied army, in the course of that evening and night; and every preparation was made for the action which was expected on the plain of Vallesa on the morning of the 20th.

“But shortly after day-light the enemy made another movement, in several columns, to his left along the heights of the Guareña, which river he crossed below Cantalapiedra, and encamped last night at Babila-fuente and Villoruela; and the allied army made a corresponding movement to its right to Cantalpino, and encamped last night at Cabeza Velloso, the 6th division and Major-General Alten's brigade of cavalry being upon the Tormes at Aldea Lengua.

“During these movements, there have been occasional cannonades, but without loss on our side.

“I have this morning moved the left of the army to the Tormes, where the whole are now concentrated; and I observe that the enemy have also moved towards the same river near Huerta.

“The enemy's object hitherto has been to cut off my communication with Salamanca and Ciudad Rodrigo, the want of which, he knows well would distress us very materially. The wheat harvest has not yet been reaped in

Castile ; and even if we had money, we could not now procure any thing from the country, unless we should follow the example of the enemy, and lay waste whole districts, in order to procure a scanty subsistence of unripe wheat for the troops.

“ It would answer no purpose to attempt to retaliate upon the enemy, even if it were practicable. The French armies in Spain have never had any secure communication beyond the ground which they occupy ; and provided the enemy opposed to them is not too strong for them, they are indifferent in respect to the quarter from which their operations are directed, or on which side they carry them on.

“ The army of Portugal has been surrounded for the last six weeks, and scarcely even a letter reaches its commander ; but the system of organized rapine and plunder, and the extraordinary discipline so long established in the French armies, enable it to subsist at the expense of the total ruin of the country in which it has been placed ; and I am not certain that Marshal Marmont has not now at his command a greater quantity of provisions and supplies of every description than we have. Any movement upon his flank, therefore, would only tend to augment the embarrassments of our own situation, while it would have no effect whatever upon that of the enemy ; even if such a movement could have been made with advantage as an operation purely military : this, however, was not the case, and when the French attempted to turn our right, I had the choice only of marching towards Salamanca, or of attacking the enemy in a position highly advantageous to him, which, for several reasons, I did not think expedient.

“ I have invariably been of opinion, that unless forced to fight a battle, it is better that one should not be fought by the allied army, unless under such favourable circumstances as that there would be reason to hope that the allied army would be able to maintain the field, while those of the enemy should not.

“ Your lordship will have seen by the returns of the two

armies that we have no superiority of numbers, even over that single army immediately opposed to us; indeed, I believe that the French army is of the two the stronger; and it is certainly equipped with a profusion of artillery, double ours in numbers, and of larger calibres. It cannot be attacked therefore in a chosen position, without considerable loss on our side.

“ To this circumstance, add that I am quite certain that Marshal Marmont’s army is to be joined by the King’s, which will be 10,000 or 12,000 men, with a large proportion of cavalry, and that troops are still expected from the army of the north, and some are ordered from that of the south; and it will be seen that I ought to consider it almost impossible to remain in Castile after an action, the circumstances of which should not have been so advantageous as to have left the allied army in a situation of comparative strength, while that of the enemy should have been much weakened.

“ I have therefore determined to cross the Tormes, if the enemy should; to cover Salamanca as long as I can; and above all, not to give up our communication with Ciudad Rodrigo; and not to fight an action, unless under very advantageous circumstances, or it should become absolutely necessary.

“ Since I wrote to your lordship on the 14th, I have learnt that General Drouet had not crossed the Guadiana, nor had he moved in that direction. Lieut.-General Sir Rowland Hill therefore still remains at Llerena.

“ The siege of Astorga continues. General Santocildes had detached a division of 4,000 infantry under General Cabrera, to Benavente. General D’Urban, with the Portuguese cavalry, joined on the left of the allied army, on the 17th instant.

“ The enemy abandoned and destroyed the fort of Mirabete on the Tagus on the 11th instant, and the garrison marched to Madrid to form part of the army of the centre. They were reduced to five days’ provisions.”

The affair at Castrejon, while it bore evidence of the gallantry and steadiness of British troops, when attacked at disadvantage, and assailed by overwhelming numbers, was marked also by an incident, than which of the many that form Peninsular reminiscences, none can be more interesting.

On arriving at the scene of action, accompanied by Marshal Beresford, Lord Wellington rode hastily forward with his staff, to observe the enemy's dispositions, and, by them, direct his own. At the moment, a body of French horse crossed the low grounds at a gallop, and being mistaken for deserters, succeeded in mounting the height on which the left of the British cavalry was posted, when, falling boldly on the skirmishers, they drove them in, and occasioned a general disorder. But the panic was but temporary.

“The reserves came up from Alaejos, and these furious swordsmen being scattered in all directions were in turn driven away or cut down; but meanwhile thirty or forty, led by a noble officer, had brought up their right shoulders, and came over the edge of the table-land above the hollow which separated the British wings at the instant when Wellington and Beresford arrived on the same slope. There were some infantry pickets in the bottom, and higher up, near the French, were two guns covered by a squadron of light cavalry, which was disposed in perfect order. When the French officer saw this squadron, he reined in his horse with difficulty, and his troopers gathered in a confused body round him as if to retreat. They seemed lost men, for the British instantly charged, but with a shout the gallant fellows soused down upon the squadron, and the latter turning, galloped through the guns; then the whole mass, friends and enemies, went like a whirlwind to the bottom, carrying away Lord Wellington, and the other generals, who with drawn swords and some difficulty got clear of the tumult. The French horsemen were now quite exhausted, and a reserve squadron of heavy dragoons coming in cut most of them to pieces; yet their invincible leader,

assaulted by three enemies at once, struck one dead from his horse, and with surprising exertions saved himself from the others, though they rode hewing at him on each side for a quarter of a mile."*

The 19th and 20th were passed in marching and manœuvring. Each hour wore away in the belief that the succeeding one would usher in a conflict; and when evening came, and the rival armies bivouacked in the other's presence, the weary soldier as he stretched himself upon his grassy bed, expected that the morrow's sun would rise upon a battle field. In the reminiscences of a life, while years shall slip away unregarded, those days of glorious excitement will come back with vivid freshness to the memory of him who fought at Salamanca.

What could be more beautiful than the military spectacle which the movement of ninety thousand men, in parallel lines, presented? The line of march was seldom without the range of cannon, and often within that of musketry. When the ground allowed it, the guns on each side occasionally opened. But the cannonade was but partially maintained. To reach a point was Marmont's object—to intercept him was that of Wellington. "The French general moving his army as one man along the crest of the heights, preserved the lead he had taken, and made no mistake;" and the extraordinary rapidity of his marching bore evidence to the truth of Napoleon's observation, that "for his greatest successes he was as much indebted to the legs as he was to the arms of his soldiers."

The morning of the 21st found the allied army on its old position of San Christoval. Marmont having garrisoned the castle of Alba, crossed the Tormes, marched up the valley of Machechuco, and bivouacked in the forest of Calvaraso de Ariba. In the afternoon, Wellington passed the bulk of his army also across the river, leaving the 3d division,

* Napier.

and a brigade of Portuguese cavalry entrenched upon the right bank of the Tormes.

The march of the 21st was tedious and fatiguing, and before the last of the columns had passed the fords, night had fallen, and a thunder storm of unusual violence came on. Nothing could harbinger a bloody day more awfully, than the elemental uproar of the night which preceded that of Salamanca. Crash succeeded crash—and in rapid flashes the lightning played over height and valley, while torrents burst from the riven clouds, and swelled all the streams to torrents. Terrified by the storm, the horses broke away from their picketings, and rushing madly to and fro, added to the confusion. One flash killed several belonging to the 5th dragoon guards, and occasioned serious injury to the men in the attempts they made to recover and secure them.

The morning broke sullenly before this uproar ended ; and with the first dawn, the light troops of the enemy commenced skirmishing ; while frequent movements of heavy columns, as they marched and countermarched, seemed rather calculated to confuse an opponent, than effect a particular object. On one of two heights, named Arapiles, the allied right was appuied, and the occupation of the other was attempted ; but the French, with a similar design, had already detached troops, who succeeded in obtaining its possession. The day wore on,—the late tempest apparently had cleared the atmosphere,—all was bright and unclouded sunshine,—and over a wide expanse of undulating landscape nothing obscured the range of sight but dust from the arid roads, or wreathing smoke occasioned by the spattering fire of the light troops. “ Marmont was busily manœuvring, and Lord Wellington coolly noticing from a height the dispositions of his opponent, which as he properly calculated would lead to a general engagement.”*

At noon, from the rear of the Arapiles, Marmont made

* Victories of the British Armies,

a demonstration, as if his design was to attack the allied left. The movement brought Lord Wellington to the ground; but readily perceiving that it was but a feint of the French marshal, he returned to his former position on the right.

At two o'clock, finding that his abler antagonist was not to be deceived, Marmont determined to outflank the right of the allies, and interpose between them and the Rodrigo road; and in consequence, commenced marching his columns by their left. This was a fatal movement—and as the French infantry extended, a staff officer announced it to Lord Wellington. One eagle glance satisfied him that the moment for attack was come—a few brief orders passed his lips—and the doom of his rival's army was pronounced.*

Of that glorious day, the following official detail was given by the victor in his despatch to Lord Bathurst:—

“In my letter of the 21st, I informed your lordship that both armies were near the Tormes; and the enemy crossed that river with the greatest part of his troops, in the afternoon, by the fords between Alba de Tormes and Huerta, and moved by their left towards the roads leading to Ciudad Rodrigo.

“The allied army, with the exception of the 3d division and General D'Urban's cavalry, likewise crossed the Tormes in the evening by the bridge of Salamanca and the fords in the neighbourhood; and I placed the troops in a position, of which the right was upon one of the two heights called

* “Marmont had remarked, and rode forward to correct the irregularity of his flank movement, and personally direct the debouchement of his 3d and 4th divisions from the wood that had partially concealed them. At that moment, Lord Wellington was seated on the hill-side, eating his hurried meal, while an aide-de-camp in attendance watched the enemy's movements with a glass. The bustle then perceptible in the French line attracted his lordship's notice, and he quickly inquired the cause. ‘They are evidently in motion,’ was the reply.—‘Indeed! what are they doing?’—‘Extending rapidly to the left,’ was answered. Lord Wellington sprang upon his feet, and seized the telescope; then muttering that Marmont's good genius had deserted him, he mounted his horse, and issued the orders to attack.”—*Victories of the British Armies.*

Dos Arapiles, and the left on the Tormes, below the ford of Santa Marta.

“ The 3d division, and Brigadier-General D’Urban’s cavalry, were left at Cabrerizos, on the right of the Tormes, as the enemy had still a large corps on the heights above Babilafuente, on the same side of the river; and I considered it not improbable that, finding our army prepared for them in the morning on the left of the Tormes, they would alter their plan, and manœuvre by the other bank.

“ In the course of the night of the 21st, I received intelligence, of the truth of which I could not doubt, that General Clausel had arrived at Pollos on the 20th with the cavalry and horse artillery of the army of the north, to join Marshal Marmont; and I was quite certain that these troops would join him on the 22d or 23d at latest.

“ There was no time to be lost therefore; and I determined that, if circumstances should not permit me to attack him on the 22d, I would move towards Ciudad Rodrigo without further loss of time, as the difference of the numbers of cavalry might have made a march of manœuvre, such as we have had for the last four or five days, very difficult, and its result doubtful.

“ During the night of the 21st, the enemy had taken possession of the village of Calvarassa de Arriba, and of the heights near it, called Nuestra Señora de la Peña, our cavalry being in possession of Calvarassa de Abaxo; and shortly after daylight, detachments from both armies attempted to obtain possession of the more distant from our right of the two hills called Dos Arapiles.

“ The enemy, however, succeeded; their detachments being the strongest, and having been concealed in the woods nearer the hill than we were; by which success they strengthened materially their own position, and had in their power increased means of annoying ours.

“ In the morning the light troops of the 7th division, and the 4th caçadores belonging to General Pack’s brigade, were engaged with the enemy on the height called Nuestra

Señora de la Peña, on which height they maintained themselves with the enemy throughout the day. The possession by the enemy, however, of the more distant of the Arapiles rendered it necessary for me to extend the right of the army *en potence* to the height behind the village of Arapiles, and to occupy that village with light infantry; and here I placed the 4th division, under the command of Lieut.-General the Hon. L. Cole: and although, from the variety of the enemy's movements, it was difficult to form a satisfactory judgment of his intentions, I considered that upon the whole his objects were upon the left of the Tormes. I therefore ordered Major-General the Hon. E. Pakenham, who commanded the 3d division in the absence of Lieut.-General Picton; on account of ill health, to move across the Tormes with the troops under his command, including Brig.-General D'Urban's cavalry, and to place himself behind Aldea Tejada; Brig.-General Bradford's brigade of Portuguese infantry, and Don Carlos de España's infantry, having been moved up likewise to the neighbourhood of Las Torres, between the 3d and 4th divisions.

"After a variety of evolutions and movements, the enemy appears to have determined upon his plan about two in the afternoon; and, under cover of a very heavy cannonade, which, however, did us but very little damage, he extended his left, and moved forward his troops, apparently with an intention to embrace, by the position of his troops, and by his fire, our post on that of the two Arapiles which we possessed, and from thence to attack and break our line, or, at all events, to render difficult any movement of ours to our right.

"The extension of his line to his left, however, and its advance upon our right, notwithstanding that his troops still occupied very strong ground, and his position was well defended by cannon, gave me an opportunity of attacking him, for which I had long been anxious. I reinforced our right with the 5th division, under Lieut.-General Leith, which I placed behind the village of Arapiles, on the





right of the 4th division, and with the 6th and 7th divisions in reserve; and as soon as these troops had taken their station, I ordered Major-General the Hon. E. Pakenham to move forward with the 3d division and General D'Urban's cavalry, and two squadrons of the 14th light dragoons, under Lieut.-Colonel Hervey, in four columns, to turn the enemy's left on the heights; while Brig.-General Bradford's brigade, the 5th division under Lieut.-General Leith, the 4th division under Lieut.-General the Hon. L. Cole, and the cavalry under Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton, should attack them in front, supported in reserve by the 6th division, under Major-General Clinton, the 7th, under Major-General Hope, and Don Carlos de España's Spanish division; and Brig.-General Pack should support the left of the 4th division, by attacking that of the Dos Arapiles which the enemy held. The 1st and light divisions occupied the ground on the left, and were in reserve.

“The attack upon the enemy's left was made in the manner above described, and completely succeeded. Major-General the Hon. E. Pakenham formed the 3d division across the enemy's flank, and overthrew every thing opposed to him. These troops were supported in the most gallant style by the Portuguese cavalry, under Brig.-General D'Urban, and Lieut.-Colonel Hervey's squadrons of the 14th, who successfully defeated every attempt made by the enemy on the flank of the 3d division.

“Brig.-General Bradford's brigade, the 5th and 4th divisions, and the cavalry under Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton, attacked the enemy in front, and drove his troops before them from one height to another, bringing forward their right, so as to acquire strength upon the enemy's flank in proportion to the advance. Brig.-General Pack made a very gallant attack upon the Arapiles, in which, however, he did not succeed, excepting in diverting the attention of the enemy's corps placed upon it from the troops under the command of Lieut.-General Cole in his advance.

“ The cavalry under Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton made a most gallant and successful charge against a body of the enemy’s infantry, which they overthrew and cut to pieces. In this charge Major-General Le Marchant was killed at the head of his brigade ; and I have to regret the loss of a most able officer.

“ After the crest of the height was carried, one division of the enemy’s infantry made a stand against the 4th division, which, after a severe contest, was obliged to give way, in consequence of the enemy having thrown some troops on the left of the 4th division, after the failure of Brig.-General Pack’s attack upon the Arapiles, and Lieut.-General the Hon. L. Cole having been wounded.

“ Marshal Sir William Beresford, who happened to be on the spot, directed Brig.-General Spry’s brigade of the 5th division, which was in the second line, to change its front, and to bring its fire on the flank of the enemy’s division ; and I am sorry to add that, while engaged in this service, he received a wound, which I am apprehensive will deprive me of the benefit of his counsel and assistance for some time. Nearly about the same time Lieut.-General Leith received a wound which unfortunately obliged him to quit the field. I ordered up the 6th division, under Major-General Clinton, to relieve the 4th, and the battle was soon restored to its former success.

“ The enemy’s right, however, reinforced by the troops which had fled from his left, and by those which had now retired from the Arapiles, still continued to resist ; and I ordered the 1st and light divisions, and Colonel Stubbs’s Portuguese brigade of the 4th division, which was reformed, and Major-General William Anson’s brigade, likewise of the 4th division, to turn the right, while the 6th division, supported by 3d and 5th, attacked the front. It was dark before this point was carried by the 6th division ; and the enemy fled through the woods towards the Tormes. I pursued them with the 1st and light divisions, and Major-General William Anson’s brigade of

the 4th division, and some squadrons of cavalry under Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton, as long as we could find any of them together, directing our march upon Huerta and the fords of the Tormes, by which the enemy had passed on their advance; but the darkness of the night was highly advantageous to the enemy, many of whom escaped under its cover who must otherwise have been in our hands.

“ I am sorry to report that, owing to this same cause, Lieut.-General Sir Stapleton Cotton was unfortunately wounded by one of our own sentries after we had halted.

“ We renewed the pursuit at break of day in the morning with the same troops, and Major-General Bock's and Major-General Anson's brigades of cavalry, which joined during the night; and, having crossed the Tormes, we came up with the enemy's rear of cavalry and infantry near La Serna. They were immediately attacked by the two brigades of dragoons, and the cavalry fled, leaving the infantry to their fate. I have never witnessed a more gallant charge than was made on the enemy's infantry by the heavy brigade of the King's German Legion, under Major-General Bock, which was completely successful; and the whole body of infantry, consisting of three battalions of the enemy's 1st division, were made prisoners.

“ The pursuit was afterwards continued as far as Peñaranda last night, and our troops were still following the flying enemy.

“ Their head quarters were in this town, not less than ten leagues from the field of battle, for a few hours last night; and they are now considerably advanced on the road towards Valladolid, by Arevalo. They were joined yesterday on their retreat by the cavalry and artillery of the army of the north, which have arrived at too late a period, it is to be hoped, to be of much use to them.

“ It is impossible to form a conjecture of the amount of the enemy's loss in this action; but, from all reports, it is very considerable. We have taken from them 11 pieces of

cannon,* several ammunition waggons, 2 eagles, and 6 colours; and 1 general, 3 colonels, 3 lieut.-colonels, 130 officers of inferior rank, and between 6,000 and 7,000 soldiers are prisoners;† and our detachments are sending in more at every moment. The number of dead on the field is very large."

Such was the unassuming narrative given by Lord Wellington of a victory, sufficiently brilliant in itself to confer immortality upon a soldier hitherto without a name. In other battles those daring flights of genius, untrammelled by formal rules of art which restricted ordinary men, had displayed the master mind of the victor; but Salamanca at once established his military superiority. It was a field of science, in which the intuitive rapidity of the conqueror detected a weakness in his opponent, and turned it to ruinous account. No trial had more to interest, and none had more to alarm; for Lord Wellington's position was so peculiar, that it was questionable whether the danger lay in courting or declining an action. His necessities were urgent, and nothing could relieve them, but an immediate retreat, or a decisive victory. If he fell back upon the frontier, the certain junction of Clausel's division, within a day or two, must give to Marmont a powerful superiority in cavalry and horse artillery, the arms by which during a march of manœuvre, the French marshal would be enabled to bring on an action when he pleased. That the allied general was threatened by a dangerous opponent, previous occurrences had proved. Of the marshals, none handled troops more beautifully than the Duke of Ragusa; and during the late operations, he had both outmarched and outflanked the allied general, and yet in all the variety of

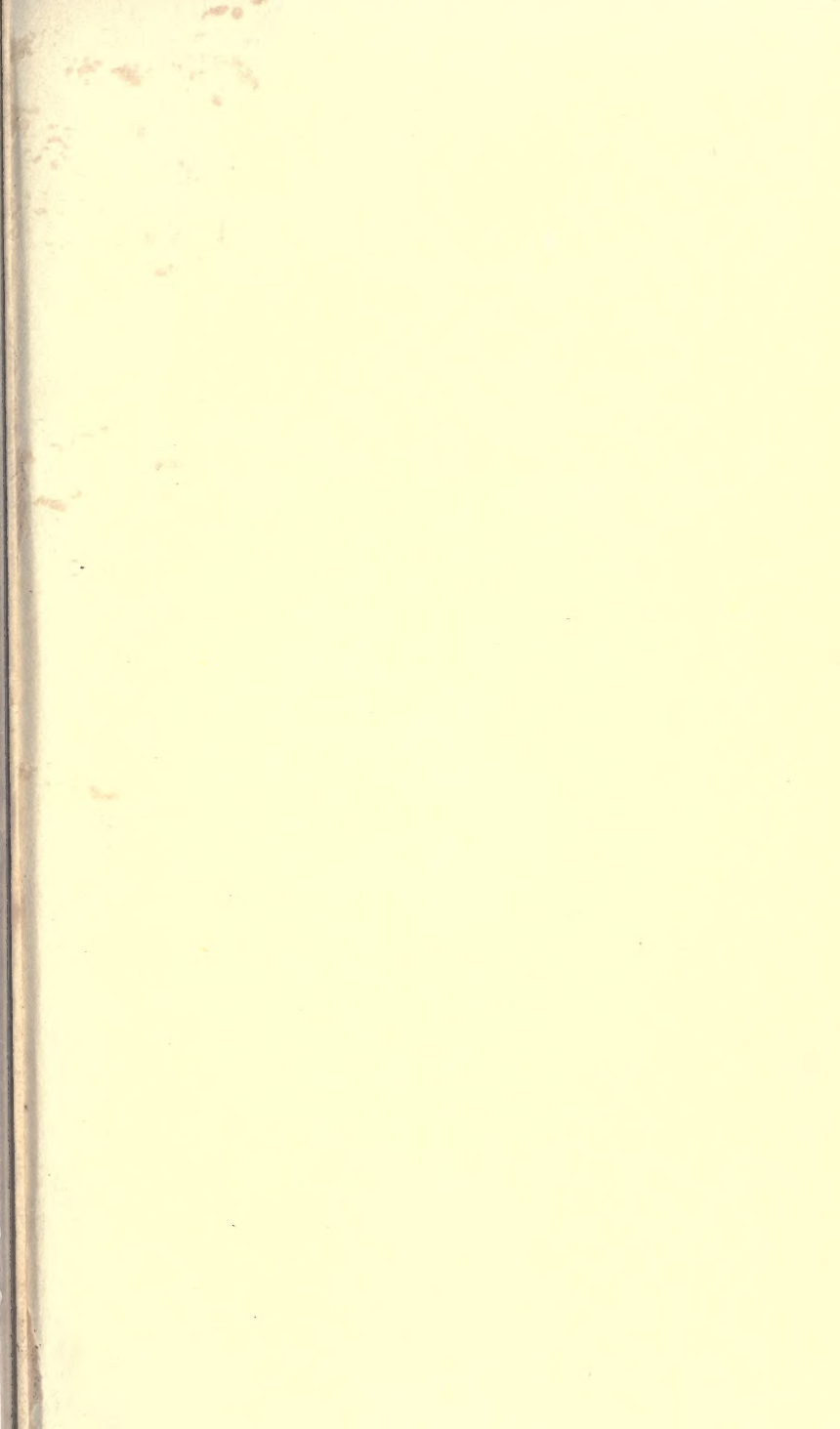
* "The official returns only account for 11 pieces of cannon, but it is believed that 20 have fallen into our hands."

† "The prisoners are supposed to amount to 7,000; but it has not been possible to ascertain their number exactly, from the advance of the army immediately after the action was over."

rapid evolutions his complicated movements had required, he had never left an opening for his watchful antagonist to attack. If Wellington received a battle, the repulse of his assailant and the winning a few trophies, would have brought no paramount advantages. Success demands a sacrifice—victory must be purchased with a loss—to cripple would be to defeat; for, when joined by the army of the centre, could Wellington, with weakened numbers, withstand an antagonist reinforced by 12,000 men? To fight without delay, and not fight at disadvantage, was scarcely possible. Days passed—no error allowed the opportunity—for every movement was made with admirable skill. For one moment however, Marmont's good genius was asleep—his order of march severed the left from the centre of his army—Wellington saw the mistake—"the fault was flagrant, and he fixed it with the stroke of a thunder-bolt:" and but for the misconduct of Carlos d'España, in removing the Spanish garrison from the castle of Alba, without noticing it to Lord Wellington, Marmont's defeat would have proved the most ruinous upon record.

Had Wellington's career closed at Salamanca, he would have left behind him a reputation of being the second soldier of the age—but a more glorious end was destined to terminate it. The Pyrenees were to witness his triumphant march—the soil of France to afford him fresh fields of glory. Who could foretel the close? or who imagine, that in a "last battle" the hero of Marengo should be vanquished by the victor of Assye, leaving for posterity to determine, whether an imperial crown or ducal coronet had adorned the brows of the greater soldier?

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